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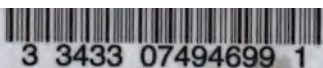
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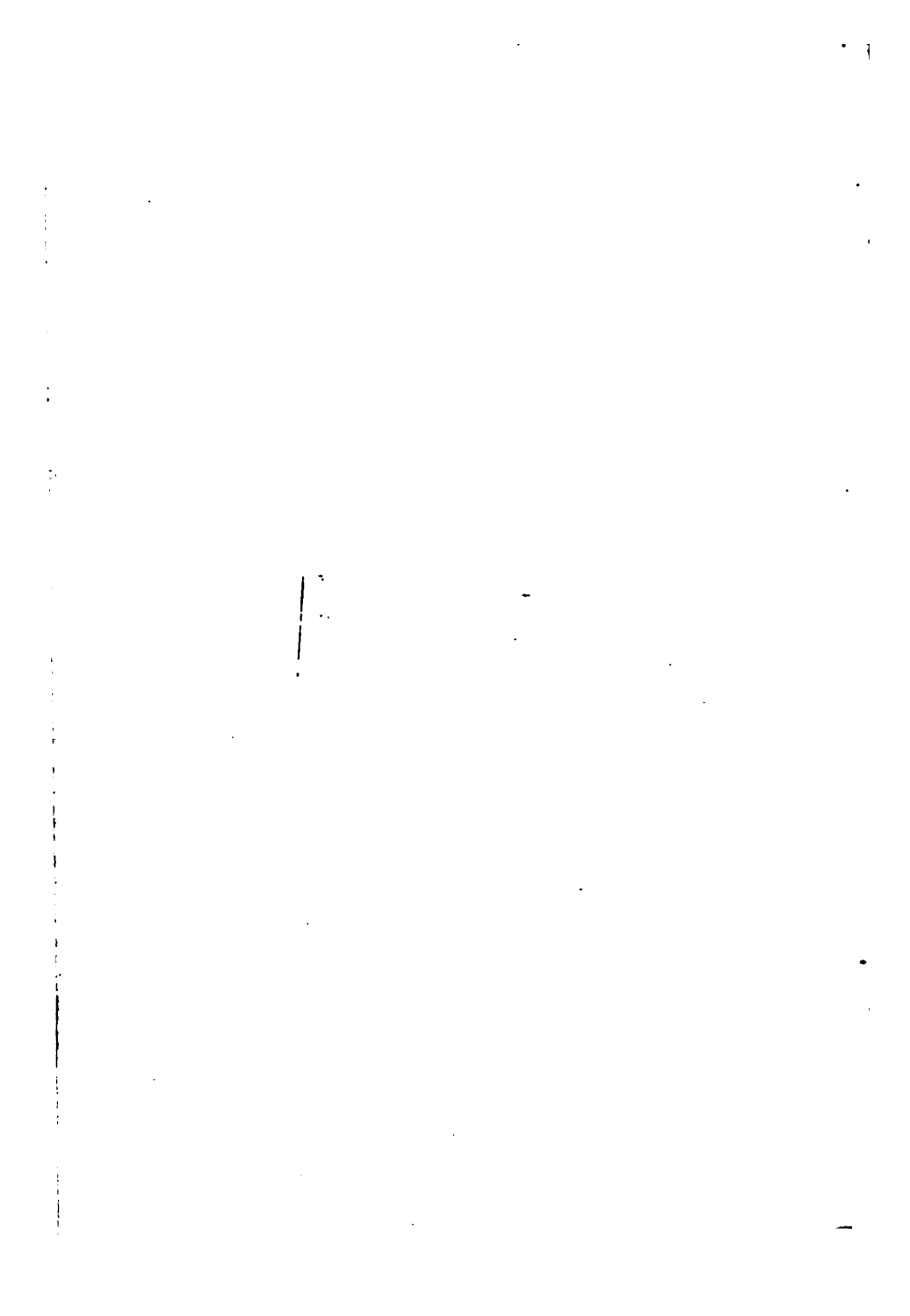


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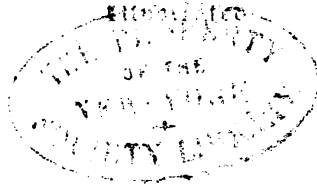
An African Treasure

HOW THE DOCTOR AND HIS WIFE, PEOPLE SOFT-
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FOR THE MEANING OF THE STRANGE CLAY
TOGRAM AND POPPY HALL, HELPED, BY THE
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THE MYSTERY OF "THE ANGEL" TOGETHER
WITH THEIR ADVENTURES IN THE INTERIOR
OF MOROCCO.

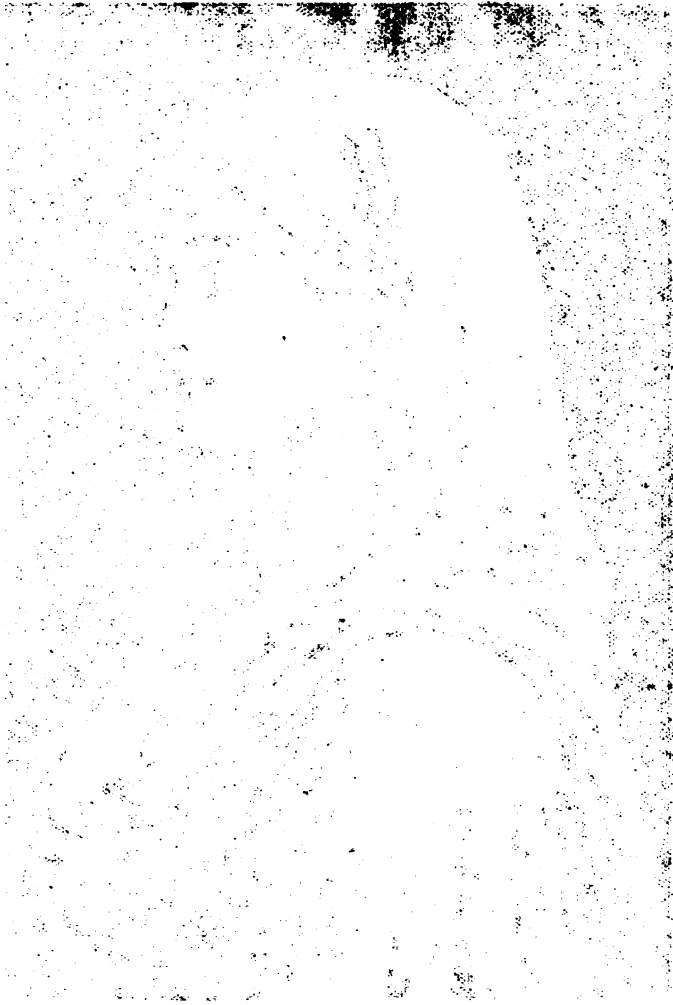
BY

J. MACLAREN COBBAN

Author of "The King of Ardenland,"
"The Angel of the Desert," etc., etc.



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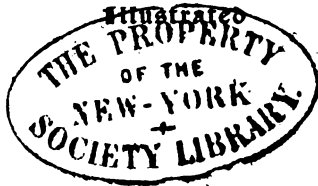
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AN AFRICAN TREASURE.

CHAPTER I

AN UNRECORDED EVENT OF JUBILEE DAY

“HOORAY! hooray! hooray!”

The roar of the multitude rolled down the street in rousing volume, like the breaking forth of a great flood. It came nearer and nearer. “Hooray—ay—ay—ay!”

Stinging the ears, stringing up the nerves, and stirring the hearts of the crowds on the pavements and the crowds on the decorated wooden stands, the crowds at windows and in rooms, and the crowds on roofs. It was the 22nd of June, 1897, and Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria was passing through the main streets of London to celebrate with her people her “Diamond Jubilee”—the completion of the sixtieth year of her reign. For

two hours the splendid extraordinary procession had been passing on its triumphal way—horsemen and footmen, sailors and soldiers, Colonials and Indians, black men and yellow men, generals and princes—in bewildering array.

All had been received with rounds of cheers, and you would have thought there could be no more cheering done, until you heard the roar of enthusiasm with which the Queen herself was greeted.

“Hooray—ay—ay! Hooray—ay—ay! ay—ay—ay!”

In the small first-floor room of a small and frowsy house over London Bridge, on the line of procession through the Borough, there sat a small and strangely-assorted party. A London Jew of low type, another Jew of severe and reverend aspect, who wore, in remarkable contrast with his white hair and white beard, a black cap and a black gaberdine, like Shylock in the play; a young, full-blooded, ebony-black negro in a tweed suit, and a fair-haired English boy of twelve or so.



The party was so delighted, and was so emphatic in its expressions of delight with the whole scene and the whole procession, that it attracted the notice of the men in the street, and of parties in the house opposite. So much interest did the odd party excite that, if at any moment their applause seemed to grow weary, rough men on the pavement behind the line of soldiers would call across:

“What cheer, old Shylock?” or “Wake up, old clo’!”

But chiefly did the boys attract the crowd’s attention. The fair-haired boy looked so bright and delicate, and the black boy regarded him with such evident love and admiration, that the men and women in the street could not keep their eyes off them. “Ain’t they pretty?” the women would murmur. “Jolly little jossers!” said the men.

It was at the culminating moment of the procession, when the Queen approached and wild enthusiasm held all eyes fixed, and kept all voices sounding—it was then that a strange thing happened.

Every throat was roaring itself hoarse with cheering, every eye was steadily fixed on the royal equipage with its eight cream-coloured Hanoverian horses, and especially on the Royal and Gracious Lady under the sunshade. It was only after the carriage had passed, and the stalwart standard-bearer behind it, and the last squadron of Horse Guards, that the crowd began to realise that the great procession was at an end for them, and to let their voices drop and their eyes wander. Then a strange hubbub and racket broke on the jaded ears of the throng. Was it a free fight? Where was it? And, why was it?

All eyes were instantly drawn to the window in which the very mixed party sat. It was no longer arrayed in the front. In the depth of the room struggling figures were seen, that uttered cries of rage and imprecation.

Among those in the street who had observed the strange party from the beginning was a young student from the neighbouring Guy's Hospital.

“By Jove!” he cried. “There will be murder there!”

He was only a boy, though he thought himself a young man, being a ‘medical,’ but he dashed across the street, followed by a comrade or two and some of the lay public, for now that the Royal Procession had passed free circulation in the street was permitted. The house, of which the first-floor room was part, was entered from a narrow side court, which ran through to a back lane. In a few seconds the medical student was up the stairs and in the room, still attended by his comrades. To their amazement all was quiet, save for the lamentations of the London Jew. But an odor—sickly sweet—filled the room—an odor which was quite familiar to the young medicos.

“Chloroform!” they all murmured in chorus.

“O poor old Shylock!” exclaimed the first student, kneeling down over the prostrate figure of the white-bearded Jew in the strange dress.

Blood flowed freely from a cut on his tem-

ple, and he pressed one hand close to his breast.

“Stabbed!” cried the student. “Poor old chap!”

Then a puzzling thing happened. The white-robed old man, who had seemed unconscious, suddenly opened his eyes, sat up, and looked wildly around, till he caught sight of the two youths lying as if dead on the floor.

“Praised be He!” said the old man in awkward English. “They ’ave not carry them away!”

He uttered these enigmatical words, and then he collapsed like a great rag-doll and fell limp to the floor. Meanwhile, the other students were examining the black youth and the white, who lay face downward.

“Here’s the chloroform!” said one. “There’s a rag soaked with it stuffed in the nigger’s mouth, and he has got a rap on the head as well.”

“Look here, boys,” said the first student, “this is a case for the bobbies.”

Then the London Jew, who seemed terrified

but unhurt, exclaimed passionately: "O my blessed dear life, don't say anything to the police! They're busy. They've got enough to do with the Jubilee. Straight, they have! O my sweet soul and body, don't let's be mixed up with the police! 'Elp us to get away, gentlemen, and I'll make you a 'andsome present. S'welp me, I will!"

Now, the foremost student did not approve of that cringing speech.

"This is a very queer game," said he, sticking his hands in his pocket, and looking with judicial severity on the Jew. "We saw you all four sitting jolly at the window one moment, and the next you were dancing and yelling. What was the row?"

"O my dear life!" said the Jew, looking at the student with exceeding slyness. "It was all through Sol—nobody else! My beastly bro'r Sol! . . . I know all about it, and I'll tell you all about it in a jiffy. Only, gents, please 'elp me to get a doctor and to get me outer this! O my blessed sakes alive!" he cried, looking on his prostrate companions

and wringing his hands. "They will die without a doctor—they will die! And I shall be broke—broke—stoney-broke!"

"*I'm* a doctor," said the foremost student, with becoming modesty. "We're all doctors, my friends and I, and we'll help to get you three over to the hospital."

"O my dear soul and body, gents! Not to the 'orspital," cried the Jew. "I don't want no police nor no 'orspital."

"Let the gen'leman 'ave his way, guv'nor," said one of those crowding on from the door. "The likes of him don't want no 'orspital. He can pay. Look at his rings and his watch-chain! Crikey! His watch-chain's thick enough for a ship's cable. Say the word, guv'nor, and I'll get a couple of cabs 'andy the back way."

"Yes, two cabs," said the Jew. "Of course, I can pay." And he pulled out a handful of money.

"All right! Two cabs," said the student to the man behind. "But mind, I'm not responsible."

So the man departed for the two cabs, one of the students went for brandy, and the foremost student and his friends set to with engrossed professional interest to discover what damage the old Jew, the young negro, and the English boy had sustained. Careful examination disclosed that the old man was in a dangerous condition, but that the young negro and the white boy were suffering from little else than the fumes of chloroform, the thickness of the negro's skull having protected him from what might have been a fatal blow. The old man's wounds were bound, and he was sufficiently revived with a little brandy to walk with aid out of the house to the back lane at the end of the court. No brandy was given to the two boys, because it was thought they would make a better recovery without it, and they were walked out as if they were dropping with sleep.

"Where to?" was demanded of the London Jew, when the three patients were disposed of, the old Jew in one cab and the two boys in the other.

“Over the bridge—’Oundsitch!” he answered, with evident reluctance. “I’ll tell you the number when we get there. . . . You’ll come with me—won’t yer?” said he to the first student. “It’ll be worth your while.”

“Of course I’ll come with you,” answered the student.

The cab containing the old foreign Jew, the London Jew, and the student drove off first. It was followed by the other cab containing the boys half-drowsed with the chloroform, and accompanied by another student. When they reached London Bridge they encountered some difficulty. The bridge was not yet reopened for traffic, and the police wished to turn them back. The London Jew was wild with anxiety and terror.

“O my blessed dear life!” he cried, looking on his aged companion. “He will die.” But when a sergeant of police thrust in his head, and demanded what was the matter, he recovered his caution sufficiently to answer: “A bit of a accident, sergeant; he’s a old, old man,

and a stranger in these parts, and I'm taking him 'ome. Let us thro', won't yer?"

They were allowed to pass over the bridge; but on the other side there was a great congestion of people and vehicles, through which they won their way very slowly. The London Jew now gave to the medical student some explanation of what had occurred in the first-floor room.

"'Ave you ever heard of Morocco?" said he—"where the leather comes from? Well, my old friend comes from there, too."

"Does he?" exclaimed the student. "I have a brother, a doctor, who has travelled in Morocco, and has written a book about it."

"Has he now?" exclaimed the Jew. And then, as if that information had given him confidence in the young student, he continued: "My name is Isaac Goldstein, and my friend's name is Yakoob Bensusan; he comes from Tetuan, if you've ever heard of the place—Tetuan in Morocco. Well, d'ye see?—him and black Musa is over here on business—biz., right enough—on the strict

q.t. That's *all* right. But the Moorish Gov'ment is after them—d'ye twig? Nothing dicky, but the Government is after them all the same. So Yakoob lies low with Musa, and the Moorish Gov'ment can't find em, till this here blessed Jubilee Day. We thinks it's all right, and out we comes to see the show. I waits for the slump in prices, and out I goes las' night and pays three quid—three golden sovereigns!—for that blessed one-eyed room. Well, there we was, as snug as pies in a oven, when—O my dear blessed life!”

“The Moorish Government found you, I suppose?” said the student, only half believing the story.

“Yes,” said the Jew. “Of course, they was put up to where we was by my beastly bro'r Sol. Sol would sell me or his blessed mother any day for five pound!”

“But,” asked the student, “why should the Moorish Government be after your old friend and the nigger-boy?”

“Ah!” said Isaac Goldstein, pursing his mouth up tightly, “that's Yakoob's secret.”

"But the Moorish Government hasn't anybody over here, has it?" asked the unbelieving student.

"O my blessed dear life!" exclaimed Isaac. "Great snakes alive! You don't believe me. Why, where have you been that you 'aven't read in the noospapers there was to have been a Moorish Basha at the Jubilee, but he didn't come along in time—that's how they always do—they never comes in time, and he's stopped in Paris! But," said Isaac, laying his finger to his nose, "there's some of his coves here. I know that for certain; and they've been looking for Yakoob and Musa—with the blessed help of my beastly bro'r!"

The student was then more inclined to believe the story, and presently he made a suggestion.

"Look here, Mr. Goldstein," said he, "I'm only a student of the hospital, and I think you ought to have an older man for this job. Shall I fetch my brother, Dr. Greathed? He lives close by in Finsbury-circus, and he could

talk to your friend Yakoob in his own language."

"The very thing," said Isaac. "That will do prime. My bro'r put us all wrong, and your bro'r will put us all right."

So they arrived at the address in Houndsditch, and got out of the cab. They looked for the coming of the second cab; but no second cab came. They waited, and Isaac ran back to look for it, but there was no trace of it. It never came.

"And Musa and the English boy are lost after all!" cried Isaac, beating his head with his hands. "O my dear precious soul and body! What will Yakoob say when he knows? He will die, and I shall be broke!—broke!—stoney-broke!"

CHAPTER II

THE MOORISH JEW'S STORY

ISAAC GOLDSTEIN'S shop was closed, and therefore little could be seen; but there was light enough to show young Greathed the gleam of barbaric guns and pistols inlaid with metal, and the shimmer of brass basins and trays of intricate Arabic pattern. It was not much that he really saw, and yet it was enough to suggest to him that Isaac Goldstein was a dealer in curios from the land of the Moors, and that, in all probability, that was the reason of his intimate connection with the Moorish Jew.

The white-haired, white-bearded Yakoob was led into the back-parlour and laid upon a frowsy couch. The little room was dusty and close, and the young medico threw open the window and drew the blind completely up, and then went off to find his brother in Finsbury-circus.

In half-an-hour Dr. Greathed was standing in Isaac Goldstein's parlour, with his back to the light, ready to examine the condition of Yakoob Bensusan. Dr. Greathed seemed a remarkable man; any fool might say that on first looking at him. He was small and of frail appearance, dark, and bald (though evidently less than forty years old), with fine aquiline features of an Arab type, and with black penetrating eyes that seemed to bore holes in you. These eyes, and his voice—clear and quiet, and of a tone like a woman's—were what most fixed attention. But, though anyone would have guessed Dr. Greathed was a remarkable man, no one would have guessed he was a great traveller. Yet, besides other daring journeys, he had twice conducted expeditions into unknown regions of Morocco and the Atlas Mountains, and in his small, frail body had shown the spirit and the endurance of a hero, for it does not need a great body to hold a great heart.

“Indeed, and of a truth,” said the doctor,

looking closely at the old man, and speaking in Moghrebbin, which is the language of the Moors, "we have met before, O Father of Whiteness—in Tetuan, it was—in the house of my good friend, Yusef Ben Nathan!"

The old man gave heed and looked—the doctor showing his face more plainly in the light—and he exclaimed with feeling, while his eye sparkled with pleasure:

"The God of our fathers be praised!" said he, speaking also in Moghrebbin. "It is the English Tabeeb,* who saved the life of my daughter! How wonderful and past finding out are the ways of Providence! I am far from my home, and smitten down in a strange land—I, Yakoob Bensusan of Tetuan! And, lo! He, the all-merciful, sends me you, the truest friend, and the most learned doctor!"

That was, of course, the language of Oriental politeness; but the old man seemed truly grateful and glad to see the doctor.

"If Providence has indeed sent me," said the doctor, smiling, "then let me not fail to

*Tabeeb=doctor.

perform my errand. And first, as to your hurts, O Yakoob."

The old man's wounds were examined. Both the wounds on the temple and the wound in the chest seemed sore and sad, but, while that on the head looked the uglier, that in the lungs was the more serious. The old Jew, however, had led a very temperate life, and his blood was little disposed to be fevered and inflamed. All that the doctor explained to him.

"Tell me the truth, O Tabeeb!" said he. "Shall I die in this place?"

"If you preserve a quiet mind, O Yakoob, you may recover," said the doctor, "by the blessing of God."

But the old man's quiet was destroyed by an unfortunate discovery, and his chance of getting well sank to nothingness.

"And where," he asked, suddenly turning to Isaac Goldstein, when the doctor had uttered his opinion, "where is Musa? and where the English lad, his companion?"

Then Isaac had to confess that both were

lost, and had to relate how they had disappeared. The old man raged and stormed at Isaac; blamed him for folly in permitting the two youths to be put into a second cab; and charged him with bad faith, with selling the interests of him, his friend, to the Moorish agents who were in London. With that furious outbreak Isaac was overwhelmed, and he made the situation worse by his outcries of grief and protestation.

“O! unlucky me!” he exclaimed, in bad Moghrebbin, “I am the child of misfortune! the father of ruin! But I swear, by my blessed dear life, that I have not been unfaithful to you, Yakoob Bensusan, whatever my wretched brother, Solomon, may have been! Musa shall be found, and the English boy! I swear it, O Yakoob! by my head!”

“It will need a wiser head and a longer and braver arm than thine, O Isaac!” cried old Yakoob, “to find the precious lads again!”

The old man's angry words were interrupted by a fit of violent coughing, the end of which was a gush of blood in the lungs and

out from the wound. Dr. Greathed, though he had not been able to hinder or interrupt the outburst, did what he could for the old man in his extremity. But his condition was very desperate. The doctor staunched the wound again, and hurried Isaac Goldstein out in search of ice.

“I shall die!” said the old man, after a long while. He spoke very weakly and sadly. “I feel that my end is at hand. It is the will of God that my business and my life shall be finished here, and now. His will be done! But I shall pass my business into a fit hand! Isaac Goldstein,” said he severely, “leave me to say a word alone with the English Tabeeb, whom alone I can trust!”

Out went Isaac very meekly and disconsolately, protesting on his “blessed dear life” that he was innocent of broken faith, “as the babe unborn.” The younger Greathed, the student from Guy’s, also went from the room, leaving alone his brother, the doctor. Had Isaac guessed that a great revelation was to be made by his old friend to the Christian doctor,

he would have protested more vehemently against being dismissed.

“Come near, O Tabeeb,” said Yakoob, “and let me speak in your ear.” And the doctor went near, declaring in his quiet way that it would be better if the old man said nothing, for if he remained perfectly quiet he might still give himself a chance of recovery. “Nay! I shall surely die,” said the old man. “I feel death in my body already. And it is well, and moreover necessary, that I should speak some words to you while I have the strength so to do. I have a secret, O Tabeeb, which I had myself hoped to have worked out to its issue and end. But God has willed it otherwise. His will be done.” He paused a little while, and seemed to collapse into nothing but white and black rags. But again he roused himself and sat up, and his long, sharp nose threatened over his beard like a bird's beak. He went on eagerly and hurriedly: “I have no men of my family—none but my daughter to leave my secret to. Now, a girl is a weak vessel to hold a matter of so much

moment, for my secret is a secret of great treasure—of a treasure-store that lies hidden beyond the great mountains. Of all men whom I have ever known of my own people or of any other, you, O Tabeeb, are the one man whom my heart and understanding bid me trust completely, and God, in His eternal wisdom, has sent you here to me at this time. I must speak in haste, because my time is short, and I beseech you, O Tabeeb, to give me your word of promise that you will *take my place in this affair*. In all things be as if you were me, bear my share of responsibility, take my share of treasure, remembering in that regard to behave as a father to my daughter, and as you are younger and wiser than I, be bolder and more active than I have been. And you shall have greater riches than men imagine in the visions of the night.”

The doctor was not rich, and he had little prospect of becoming rich by the pursuit of his profession, because he was so delicate that he had to make frequent long absences from England to maintain himself in working

health at all. Besides, for him the suggestion of hidden treasure had immense fascination, as it has for most men, and also the prospect of travel and adventure appealed to him powerfully, although his body was frail and small. Yet he hesitated.

“You speak of ‘*share*,’ O Father of Whiteness,” said he. “Does that mean there are other men concerned?”

“Listen, O Tabeeb, and I shall relate all the matter as it fell out,” said the old man. “In the days of Mulai Soleeman, a great Sultan of the Moors who lived many years ago, there was an expedition made into the desert, beyond the great mountains that bear eternal snow on their heads. The expedition was made to eat up the wild tribes and to plunder them of their gold and ivory and feathers. The chiefs of that expedition—(listen and understand, O Tabeeb)—were three. A Jew of Tetuan, who was the Sultan's treasurer, for the great Mulai Soleeman favored my oppressed people; a negro kaid, or captain, of the Sultan's bodyguard of black Bokharis;

and an Englishman who had been carried off by Moorish pirates from an English ship and raised by Mulai Soleeman to favor and power. The expedition ranged through the desert for several years, and discovered strange tribes, and wonderful, half-dead cities and temples built many ages ago by the Roumin.* They fought battles, made conquests and collected vast treasure; and when their hearts were weary with war and their hands laden with plunder, they turned their faces again towards Marakesh.† It was then that, wandering back by a new way, they lighted upon one of the wonders of the world. An ancient, strange, and mystic city, all white like alabaster, all tumbled in ruins, and all empty of living souls. They encamped there for a night, and the three chiefs wandered in the moonlight among the ruins and wondered at all they saw. When there seemed no more spirit for wonder in them they came by chance upon the inner courts of a palace, and there,

* Roumin=Romans.

† The *City* of Morocco is so named by the Moors.

how I know not, they stumbled upon a secret treasure-chamber, and they sat them down and looked about them with amazement and with no life in them. It was a royal treasure-house they viewed, filled with gold and silver wrought in strange devices and set with all manner of precious stones. And a lady guarded the treasure—a goddess, said the adventurers—an angel of Paradise, with bright and jewelled raiment and a flaming sword. So the story has been handed down.

“Now the three were alone, the Jew, the black kaid, and the Englishman, and they took shrewd counsel together, and said each to the other, ‘Lo, here are we and our men overladen with plunder for the Sultan; it is impossible we can carry to him more. Let us privately make note of this place, which none hath seen but ourselves, and let us keep the secret of it to ourselves, for the Sultan has already too much and his soul is filled with greed. He will give us little or nothing of the store of all our plunder; but we shall have this when we can return for it.’

“And they did so. They made careful note of the position of the treasure-chamber, and made measurements of distances; and, because the Englishman was the only one of the three who could write, he wrote all down upon a paper. But, as they sat afterwards in the tent of one of them, they bethought them that the paper might be lost, or that the Sultan might take it from them; moreover, each was jealous of the other possessing it. Therefore did they agree to the plan proposed by the Englishman. The Englishman was a man of ships, who understood the shipman's strange art of pricking word and devices on the skin, and his proposal was that the description which had been written down should be divided word by word among the three, so that it should be complete only when all three were together, and be understood only when read in its proper order word by word.

“Thus a word was pricked with a needle and gunpowder by the Englishman upon his own arm, among the devices of ships already there; another word was pricked by him upon

the shaven skull of the negro kaid, because he could best endure the pain there, and because it was commonly concealed by his turban; and a third word was pricked upon the Jew's skin upon what part I do not know, as you shall hear. And in this manner word by word was pricked, till the whole was gone through, and each man bore one-third of the whole writing."

The old man paused, and the doctor handed him iced water to drink. Presently he continued his strange story.

"They returned to Marakesh to wait for an opportunity to escape from the Sultan and to go back in company to the outlandish place of the treasure-house. But the negro kaid being, like all his race, slow of understanding, impatient of mind, and incontinent of tongue, let the secret escape him. Being unable to read or even to see what was written on the top of his head, and being exceedingly curious to know that it was always there, he set his women to admire it, and being filled with vanity he boasted that the writing was the

direction to a wonderful treasure that none knew of save himself; but, being asked if he had written these words on his own head, he was compelled to confess that the Englishman had done that.

“The news spread through the Sultan’s Court, and in a little while the negro kaid was told he would be sent for by the Sultan. Then the three met, filled with alarm, and took to instant flight. They clearly saw that there was no hope of their setting eyes on the treasure for long years, even if they ever might; and lest they might not, they agreed that each should hand on his share of the words of the directions inscribed upon his heir, and that they should keep each other informed of their place of sojourn. And so they parted, to go whither God might lead.”

“And they never met again,” inquired the doctor, “to go in quest of the treasure in the White City?”

“It was written by God,” answered the Jew, “that they should not. And thus, O Tabëeb, we come, in the wonderful Providence of God,

to this hour. It would take too much of my failing breath to tell you in full the whole history up till now. But I, Yakoob Bensusan, am the son of that Jew, and here," said he, "is my share, my father's share, of the words of guidance for the finding of the treasure."

He undid his sleeve, and showed above his shrivelled elbow, in the bend of the arm, that there was tied a tiny bag of greasy silk.

"Take it," said the old man.

The doctor untied it.

"Open it and look," said the old man. "It is written upon my own skin, cut from my person when I was a child."

The doctor took from the tiny silk bag a scrap of parchment that could be held in the palm of his hand. Then a thought flashed upon him.

"And the other two heirs," said he, "are the black and white boys that have been lost to-day?"

"Your guess is right, O Tabeeb," answered the old man, "and shows your great understanding."

The door opened suddenly, and the old man turned his head towards it with a fierce frown. But instantly his expression changed to a sweet smile. In the doorway stood a young and handsome Jewish girl, while behind her appeared the doctor's brother, gazing at her with youthful admiration and something like amazement.

"Oh!" she cried in Moghrebbin, "are you very ill, my father?"

"It is my daughter," said the old man, turning to the doctor.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDENT'S ADVENTURE

"AH!" cried the girl. "Is it the English Tabeeb that made me well long ago? Surely I remember the bare head and the bright eye!"

"And," cried the doctor, "can this be the little feeble girl I saw in Tetuan five years ago?"

"I am now sixteen, Sidi," said she, looking at him shyly, but with a coquetry she could not avoid.

The doctor looked on her with interest; she was full-grown and (as I have said) very handsome, with the opulent qualities of color and shape that characterise Jewish women of Morocco at their finest. Unlike her father, she was dressed in English fashion. She blushed and laughed at the doctor's interested gaze.

“And you have come now to make my father well?” said she. “Ah! Sidi Tabeeb, you are always gracious and good!”

“Leave me, my daughter, for a little longer with the Tabeeb,” said her father. “I have something of great privacy and importance to say to him, light of my eyes. You may come again in a little while.”

So the girl withdrew, and ran almost into collision with young Greathed. The old man wrung his hands and wept a few bitter tears.

“May the God of our fathers forgive me that I repine!” he murmured. “But she, my Susannah, is all I have left. All my substance has been spent in promoting this business I tell you of—in bringing myself and the other two together! And now, when it is done, lo! I am stricken down, and I must die! . . . You will see to it that she does not want. You will put your hand in mine, and give me your word of promise?”

“I promise,” said the doctor, “to keep watch over your daughter, and to take her back to

Tetuan, and, as far as I am able, to fulfil your desire about this wonderful treasure—if"—he added—"you do not recover."

"We are in the hands of God," said the old man, "but I doubt I shall die. The Angel of Death is laying his hand upon my heart."

"That this writing," said the doctor, holding up the odd scrap of parchment, "may be of any avail, if you should not recover and take possession of it again, permit me to ask some questions, O Father of Whiteness!"

"It is well said, O Tabeeb," said the Jew. "Say on. Ask, and I shall answer."

"These two boys, the white and the black, do they bear the inscriptions you speak of?" asked the doctor.

"It is certain that they must bear them," answered the Jew. "They know that they bear them: it has been told to them since their earliest knowledge."

"Have you not seen them, then, O Father of Whiteness?" asked the doctor.

"I have seen that on the arm of the English boy, but that on Musa, the black boy, I have

not seen, because it is covered with his hair. His head has not been shaved since he came to this land three years ago with an Englishman. Wallahy! the money and the trouble it cost me to find him!"

"But, having found them, O Father of Whiteness, why did you not insure against losing them again by copying their inscriptions on paper?"

"Sidi Tabeeb, they came together under my care but yesterday evening at a late hour. Moreover—although it may seem foolish to a learned Tabeeb, yet nevertheless is it true—it was ever counted forbidden and accursed by my father for one to copy the inscription of another, because he might thus be tempted to steal all the treasure for himself. The inscriptions must not be copied—all must be done by the three together."

"Oh!" exclaimed the doctor. "Then if you, O Father of Whiteness, should be spared by God and recover and go—or, if I should go in your stead—to seek the treasure, it must be in the company of the two boys."

"It must be in their company, Sidi Tabeeb," answered the Jew, beginning to look somewhat worried by the questions, as if he feared the doctor, on hearing these odd conditions and restrictions, should cry off his promise.

"I understand," said the doctor. "The boys, then, must be not only found, but, when found, must be kept and taken along through all the journey."

"They must be not only found, but taken along, Sidi."

"And is there no one in this country to miss them or to inquire after them?"

"There is no one, Sidi Tabeeb," answered the Jew.

"Whosoever of us goes on that journey," said the doctor, "will have his hands full of care and his head beset with danger."

"You will go, Sidi Tabeeb," said the Jew. "You will be strong and of a good courage, wary and resolute—as you have ever been—and Heaven will reward you with success, because you will undertake all for the sake of the weak and the fatherless. For not only will my

daughter soon be an orphan, but these boys are orphans already."

After that Susannah knocked at the door and was admitted. Dr. Greathed gave her directions concerning the nursing of her father, and then he retired, with the promise of returning later in the day. He had barely reached home and sat down to smoke a pipe, and to think over the strange things that had happened, and the strange things he had heard that day, when his brother came with a great to-do, along with his fellow-student who had been in the company of the lost boys in the cab.

Young Greathed, when the doctor had left the Jew's house, had straightway returned to the hospital, resolved, if he did not find his missing friend there, to give information to the police.

He encountered his friend just entering, and so the police were still left undisturbed. But the student had a story to tell, and with it and him he had hurried back to the shop in Houndsditch—to find his brother gone. The

student's story was told in the old Jew's presence, and interpreted by Isaac Goldstein; and the old Jew being very angry and distressed thereat, they came on to Dr. Greathed's.

"And what is the story?" asked the doctor.

The story of the student was as follows:

When the cab had passed over London Bridge and was pressing through the crowd, it was turned towards Cannon-street, instead of towards Grace-church-street, which made the student rise to point out to the driver his error. But he had not put his head out of the window before a man of French or Jewish aspect—with twisted moustache, long nose, and pointed beard—set his face before him, suddenly opened the door, and presented a revolver to his breast.

"Sit down, sir!" said he, in English, but with a strong French accent (the student thought); "sit down, or I shoot."

The student sat down, in sheer astonishment.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want nothing from you at all," said the man, "except—be quiet. You are deceive with these two boys. They are take away from their house—from their mother and their father, and I am command to take them back."

"To their father and their mother?" asked the student.

"Yes, sir," said the man.

"To the *same* father and the *same* mother?" asked the student. "Both of them?"

"Sir, you are an insolent," said the man. "But this is free country, you say, you others. It is free to me also as to you. Why you put the nose into this business—mine? If you put the nose, I will blow you the nose. If you speak more words, I will shoot my gun. Excuse me, but for my business it is necessary that I stop you the mouth and the hands, because I not want you to say anything or do anything."

The man was tall and strong, the young student was weak and timid, and the black boy and the white sat still, waking up for a

moment stupidly, or blinking and drowsy with sleep. The student struggled, with great hand on his mouth.

"*Restez-vous!*" said the man. "Be tranquil, and you will have no dommage. I will not take you. I not need you; and—see!—here is money I put in your pocket."

The end was that the young student was bound hand and foot and his mouth gagged. And then, as he sat on the back seat with the stranger beside, he saw through the glass that *two* men sat on the box-seat—one, that is, beside the driver, which at once suggested to him that the driver must be in this kidnapping conspiracy, and probably had been from the beginning.

Somewhat near St. Paul's the cab turned out of the stream of traffic, and down a narrow and deserted land—into Doctors' Commons, the student thought. Half-way down the lane, between the tall and silent houses, the cab was stopped, the other man sprang from the box, opened the cab door, and helped out the black boy and the white, who sleepily did

what was suggested to them, and who were followed and guarded from the cab by the man with the revolver. Then the cab-door was shut again upon the student, bound and gagged; and the four marched off down the lane, and were seen no more. The cabman drove off, in and out crooked lanes, threading back and forth, the student thought, merely to bewilder him and to spend time. At length he stopped and putting round his head, he spoke.

“Where to now, sir?” was all he said.

Getting no reply from his gagged passenger, he dismounted from his box and opened the door. He affected the greatest amazement.

“Lor’ bless my soul, sir! Who’s been and gone and tied you up like a fowl? Dressed for market, that’s what you are!” said he, as he undid the young man’s bonds.

“I’ll report you! I’ll take your number!” cried the angry student as soon as his mouth was free. “You know all about this business, I believe.”

“Wot business?” said the offended cabby.

"The gent wot sat beside me said, says he, 'Drive the young gentleman wot's left in the cab to Friar's Lane.' Well, ain't I done it? Here you are. This is Friar's Lane. Some chaps don't know when they're well off. I've a good mind to charge you your fare. But I won't. Why? 'Cos I've a kind heart."

He jumped again upon his box, grinned and winked at the student tottering on the pavement, whipped up his horse, and clattered away. The student's legs were too weak to permit him to pursue the man—even if that would have been of any use. Nor had he taken the number of the cabman, or—what was easier—the number of the cab. He made his way back to the hospital, where young Greathed found him.

"And that's the whole story," said the doctor, with some severity.

"That's all, sir," said the young man.

"Well, I can't say," added the doctor, "that you've distinguished yourself."

"I'm not particularly proud of myself," said the student.

"I see no reason why you should be," said the doctor.

Doctor Greathed's interest was becoming so caught and entangled in this affair that he started up at once, said that he was going back to Houndsditch to see how the old Moorish Jew was getting on, and invited his brother to accompany him. All three set off together in silence, saying "Good-bye" to the sad and unfortunate student on the way.

"I hope," said the doctor to his brother, "that you have a little more pluck and resource than your friend."

"He is *not* my friend," said young Greathed, in a resolute and injured tone, which subtly conveyed that he had nothing in common with the young man who had let himself be so utterly victimised by a mere foreigner with a revolver.

When they entered the house of Isaac Goldstein in Houndsditch they were shocked by the news that the unfortunate Yakoob Bensusan was dead. Isaac was in a great taking of tears and terror. He was afraid there would

be a police inquiry, afraid there would have to be a *post-mortem*, afraid he would be ruined—afraid of everything.

“Oh! dear doctor,” he cried, “what shall I do? O my blessed dear life! if I had only known, never, never would I have touched the job. I shall be broke—broke—stoney-broke!”

“Come, come!” said the doctor, “don’t blubber. I’ll make the inquiry as easy for you as I can, and I shall see you through it. Did your poor old friend leave any last word for me?”

Isaac did not know—on his “blessed dear life” he did not—but Susannah, the Moorish Jew’s daughter, who was found weeping beside the dead body, said that her father had murmured at the last some memorable words to her. (And how lovely she looked, with her hands clasped in agony, and with the tears welling and shining in her great dark eyes!)

“Tell the Sidi Tabeeb,” he had said, “to ‘Remember.’ I die in peace because he has given me his word.” Then, in final gasps,

“To Paris he must go! . . . The two boys!
. . . The Basha Mohammed Misfiwa! . . .
Pursue! . . . Overtake! . . . In time!”

That was all. And with the promise that he would return before he went to bed, he took his way home again with his brother, whose heart and head were now filled with the beauty and distress of the Jewish maiden.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT SANDY PEBBLES

MORE and more was Dr. Nathaniel Greathed captivated and led on by the mystery concerning the treasure. He had read enough about North Africa—how it had been held more than two thousand years ago by the Carthaginian, against whom the Roman fought and of whom Livy wrote; and how it had been overrun in succession and conquered by Romans, Vandal Goths, and Arabs—and he had travelled enough there to know that the ancient and powerful civilisations of Carthage and Rome had left wonderful impressions never to be effaced, and, more than all, had produced among the people traditions of wealth and treasure—traditions which sometimes had proved to be well founded.

What then? Beneath his quiet, ordinary professional manner the doctor had exceedingly romantic and adventurous impulses. He was

truly born to be a captain of a forlorn hope, a desperado of a lost cause; but early training, ill health, and what not, had conspired to make of him merely a clever medical man, with a small consulting practice. This mystery of the ancient treasure in the white and ruined city of the Sahara seized his fancy, and the facts of that day—the struggle between the old Jew of Tetuan and the representatives of the Sultan of Morocco—whipped him up to resolution. It was characteristic of the lightness of his temper, the quickness of his decision, and the touch of reckless superstition in his nature, that, as he paced with quick steps up and down his consulting-room, with his brother's eyes on him, he tossed a penny with a hole in it for a "Yes" or "No." The penny turned up "Yes."

"The best of three!" he said to himself, and spun the penny again. And again the penny said "Yes."

His brother looked on in amazement; he had never thought of his senior (who was twenty years older than he)—he had never

thought of him but as old and wise, serious and self-contained. And now to see him behave like an irresponsible youth struck him (as he himself would have put it) "all of a heap."

"What's that for?" he asked, unconsciously assuming a more free and equal tone with his brother.

"Jim," said Dr. Greathed, standing before him, "your time is nearly up at Guy's. You're too young to go as any man's assistant—you're not twenty."

"I can't help that," said his brother. "I would be older if I could."

"You'll be old fast enough, my boy," said his elder; "don't you trouble. But you need experience. If we could have the experience of years and the health of youth together, what might we not do?"

"Well," said the younger, "can't you and me be partners together?"

"You're an impudent dog, Jim!" laughed his brother. "But it is something like that I was going to propose. How would you like

to go with me on another expedition through Morocco?"

"Spiffing!" said his brother.

"A very dangerous expedition, mind," said the elder.

"All the better," said the youth.

"Your life in your hands, as the saying is."

"Hooray!" cried Jim. "If I had my own life in one hand, I bet I'd have somebody else's life in the other!"

"I'd put you in charge of the lives of the whole expedition," said his brother; "you'd be medical officer under me—no shirking."

"All right, Nat," said Jim. "Who's going—and when do we start?"

"To learn that," said his brother, "you'd better come with me. I must see about ways and means."

In his excitement the doctor had forgotten the flight of the hours. When they got near the Mansion House he was reminded that it was drawing towards dark by the crowds that were beginning to fill the streets like a swollen and slow-moving river. They were assembled,

he knew, ready to see the illuminations of that memorable Jubilee day.

“He’ll have finished dinner, I daresay,” he said, half to himself, but yet with a thought to his brother. “But he has always something ready to eat.”

And then he explained to Jim that he was speaking of an old college-chum, who was very rich, who lived a bachelor life in chambers in the Temple, who had no business or profession of his own, but amused himself with inquiring into and criticising the affairs and professions of other men; who had no knots of his own to undo, but who had acquired considerable skill in disentangling the knots of others, and who had twice travelled with him in Morocco.

There were no vehicles in the street, nothing but the wonderful crowd, like the full flood of a river, moving slowly, steadily, and irresistibly, in complete order and amazing quiet; and that gave the City a most unusual and weird aspect. Roadways and pavements were filled from wall to wall with two currents

of people, the one slowly grinding westward and the other as slowly grinding eastward, while the dust of their tread floated over them like the fine flour of a mill, and seemed in the waning light like a golden haze. The doctor and his brother joined the westward current, and found it necessary to accommodate themselves to the crowd's leisurely and wondering march.

Thus they arrived at the gate of Middle Temple Lane, and after some difficulty were admitted. They passed down the deserted lane to the river-gate at the bottom. They turned aside and entered a deep doorway, and climbed up and up the stone stairs till they reached the third floor.

"Ah!" said the doctor, breathless from the exertion and the heat, "that's all right. He's not sporting his oak."

He hammered with the knocker, and a clerk or valet (it was impossible to say which the man might be) opened the door.

"Your master at home, Johnson?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, sir," answered Johnson. "He's just at dinner."

"Alone, Johnson?"

"Alone, sir," answered Johnson.

They were ushered into a large room, with a wide unblinded window that looked upon the Temple Gardens, and gave a sweeping and magnificent view of the river, up and down. The window was open, and caused a rushing draught when the door was open also.

"Shut the door!" roared a great man, with a flaming red head and beard, who sat alone at the table with a lamp half turned up.

"All right, Sandy," said the doctor, and quickly closed the door.

"Hello, old chap!" roared the man again, "it's you, is it? And what are you strolling about on Jubilee night for?"

"One question at a time, Sandy," said the doctor. "It's me, of course; but it's more than me, it's also my younger brother Jim. You've never met him. He's a doctor, too. Jim, shake hands with Alexander Pebbles, the

best man in the world, and the biggest grumbler."

Then Jim had his first view of Mr. Alexander (or Sandy) Peebles. All ways he was most impressive. Not only had he a great lion head with red hair and beard, but also he was enormous in height and enormous in breadth, and withal he was very fat. But so tall was he that he did not at first appear so very broad or so very stout; and so broad and stout was he that you did not think he was very tall, until you saw how greatly he overtopped a fairly tall person like Jim himself.

"How are you?" he growled amiably, smiling and squeezing Jim's hand in his vast paw. "Pleased to know you. Your brother," he added, "always calls me a grumbler because I hate draughts. Of all things in this world I most fear and hate—hate!—a draught. Though your brother's a doctor, and tolerably clever, he hasn't discovered that it is cold that kills—and by cold I mean draught—not swords, nor bullets, nor fever, nor smallpox, nor anything else. I can defy

them all, but I'm afraid of every beastly draught."

"But why don't you close your window?" Jim ventured to suggest.

"Because," cried Sandy, in a great voice of impatience that so foolish a question should be asked, "though I hate draughts, I love air!"

"Oh! I see," said Jim, and subsided.

"Neither of you have dined, I suppose?" demanded Sandy Peebles. "Johnson, knives and forks. And now, what's up? You never come to see me, you know, except when there's something odd in the wind."

"Something of great importance," answered the doctor. "But I find I'm dying of hunger. Let me eat a mouthful of food first."

"Eat away," said Sandy; "and though I had finished, I'll join you."

When the three had well eaten and drunk, and gossiped of things that did not matter, they lighted pipes, and went and sat by the window that gave a grand view of the river and of much of the glory of the illuminations

that were bursting forth. And in this romantic and gorgeous setting the doctor set forth his story.

“I ought to say,” he began, “that I have brought my brother Jim along with me, partly from economy—I mean economy of time and energy. He doesn’t know of this yet, and I want him to know; and now the same telling will do for you both. But to begin at the very beginning, Jim himself shall first tell you what he saw and heard this morning when he was looking on at the Queen’s procession in the Borough.”

Jim told his story, wondering a little what it might have to do with the important things his brother was going to reveal.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Sandy Peebles, in the middle of it. He burst into a roar of laughter, buried his great face in his vast hands and laughed again. “Never mind me,” he said, recovering himself. “I was thinking of a funny thing—the funniest thing in the world. But go on with your story.”

When Jim had finished, his brother added

the first sequel—the student's adventure in the second cab (at which Sandy Peebles giggled and sniggered in the most extraordinary and disconcerting fashion)—and then the second sequel: the important part, the kernel, of the whole story—the strange revelation, namely, of the Moorish Jew. To that part of the tale both the great and careless Sandy Peebles and the eager young Jim gave a most surprised and engrossed attention.

“Do I doubt? Do I dream? Or are visions about?” exclaimed Sandy, filling another pipe. “By Gosh! To think of it! One-third of the inscription on the English boy's arm, one-third on the nigger's skull, under the wool—that's what you mean?”

“Exactly,” answered the doctor.

“Surely, it's all a flam!” roared Sandy. “It must be! It's incredible! Even in my experience of queer twists!”

“At any rate,” said the doctor, “there is the substantial evidence of the last third of the inscription. I've seen it. I've got it!”

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“You have? By Jove!” cried Sandy.
“Let's look at it!”

“Stop a moment,” said the doctor softly.
“Take away that big hand of yours. 'Pon my word, Sandy, it's like an acre of red clay. I won't say you're an unscrupulous man; but I don't show you this bit of parchment—which is the very skin of the old Jew, according to his own account—I don't show you this, till we understand each other.”

“What a fearful draught!” roared Sandy, suddenly springing to his feet. “Shut that door!”

CHAPTER V

THE WRITING ON THE PARCHMENT

"YES, sir," said a voice from the door.

"Oh! it's you, Johnson," said Sandy. "Saw them off all right?"

"Yes, sir," said Johnson. "Caught the train quite comfortable."

"Thanks, Johnson," said his master. And Johnson withdrew.

When the man was gone, and when the door was securely shut again, the doctor resumed:

"I'm going to take the Moorish Jew's place in this: he asked me to. Now I've come to you, Sandy, because I want your help. I want you to join by person and by purse. I have no money—you know that; and you have too much, which is a common injustice in the world."

"Too common to call for remark," said Sandy. "You want my pledge to join you in this hare-brained game? I'll see you——" he roared.

"No, you won't, Sandy," said the doctor, quietly. "You'll come with me, not only out of friendship for an old chum, but also because there will be fine fun, besides the prospect of a great profit on your outlay on the expedition."

"I can't, my boy," said Sandy, in a tone as of deep regret. "I'm otherwise engaged."

"For how long?" asked the doctor, in disappointment.

"Let me see," said Sandy. "Say till tomorrow morning." Then he roared again with laughter, grovelled in his hands, crying: "It's too—too comic! It's the essence of the human comedy! There's a play in it!" Then laying his great forefinger on the doctor's waistcoat, he said:

"I don't mind telling you now that if it hadn't been for me you'd have no story to tell, neither of you."

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"What do you mean, Sandy?" demanded the doctor.

"I mean this, my boy," answered Sandy Peebles: "I was appealed to by a certain party from Paris—had heard of me, I suppose, as an amateur detective—I was asked to find a certain Jew, lately come to this country from Morocco, and without any public scandal or violence to rescue from his custody two boys, a black and a white, and I did it, though my agents blundered a good deal. But," he added, with a smile of self-approval, "I think I managed neatly. The room in the Borough," said he, turning to Jim, "where you saw them, was *my* room, let by *me* to Mr. Isaac Goldstein. I needn't trouble you with the particulars of how it was all arranged."

"Then," said Jim, with evident interest and admiration, "I suppose it was through you that the boys were afterwards kidnapped from the cab?"

"It was," answered Sandy.

"And you know, then, where they are?" said the doctor, in an unusually shrill tone.

"Yes, I know where they are."

"Where, Sandy?" cried the doctor, jumping to his feet.

Sandy took out his watch. "They were here——"

"Here?" exclaimed the doctor, looking wildly round.

"They were here," continued Sandy, "when you came in. They went with Johnson, a few minutes after, to catch the nine o'clock train at Charing Cross; and they are now off comfortably in the train to Paris, as you heard Johnson say."

"Oh! Sandy, to think of it!" murmured the doctor, bitterly shaking his head. "You had those boys under your hand, and might have kept them; and now they must be found again!"

"And, 'Oh! Sandy, to think of it!' I can say to myself," declared he. "If I had known the value of the boys under my hand, I would at least have copied their inscriptions!"

"You have been done, Sandy," said the doctor.

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"I have," said Sandy; "done to a turn. I won't palliate the fact."

"The boys must be found again," said the doctor.

"They *shall* be found," cried Sandy, with a furious look. "By Jove! they *shall* be found!"

"Then you will join us?" asked the doctor, eagerly.

"To-morrow morning, not before," answered Sandy. "I keep to my contract. But as soon as I receive a telegram in the morning that they are safe and sound in Paris, I count myself quite free to go after them."

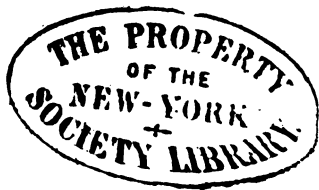
"And you will?"

"I will."

"That's the ticket!" said the doctor, gleefully. "Let us shake hands on it."

"And now," said Sandy, "I suppose you don't mind letting me look at the Jew's dirty bit of parchment?"

"Have you made it out?" asked Sandy Peebles, when the scrap of parchment was produced.



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“I haven’t tried,” said the doctor. “I haven’t had time yet. I have only noticed that it is written in Arabic.”

“Then,” said Sandy, “it will be quite fresh to each of us.”

So both sat down over it, for Sandy, as well as the doctor, could talk Moghrebbin and read Arabic. The letters were somewhat dim, and therefore Sandy got a magnifying-glass. But even with that help, they could make nothing out.

“Of course,” said the doctor, “if you remember what a dot-and-carry-one fragment of the full directions this must be, we can’t hope to make sense of it.”

“No,” said Sandy. “But, by Jingo! we can’t make a single word out!”

“I’ve got it!” exclaimed the doctor at length, after many vain efforts to spell out a word of Arabic. “It’s not Arabic at all! *It’s English written in Arabic characters!*”

“By Jove, so it is!” cried Sandy, when he had pored a little longer. “The first word reads ‘*first*,’ and the second ‘*south*.’ A crafty

The Writing on the Parchment 69

rascal the Englishman must have been! He thought, in this way, I suppose, to keep it all to himself, and at the same time impose upon his chums; for if they couldn't read Arabic, they would be almost sure to know the look of it!"

"It is odd," said the doctor, wondering, "that the old Jew said nothing about it. I am certain he could read Arabic."

"Perhaps he made it a matter of conscience," said Sandy, "not to try to read it till the other two could be added."

"And perhaps," said the doctor, "as his heir in the business, I ought to have his scruples."

"Pooh!" said Sandy, resuming his poring on the bit of parchment. "Here is something," he cried presently, "to hold on to! '*Mountains Saghru!*' We've heard of the *Jebel Saghru*. '*Mountains of Jebel Saghru*.' I wager that is the full and complete phrase!"

Then the doctor pored over the parchment also, and, becoming engrossed with the occupation, they both continued and worked all

through the writing, while Jim sat at the window and looked out upon the shining river, the illuminated bridges, the ghostly-white dome of St. Paul's, and all the glow in the warm, upper air from the emission of so much Jubilee light below. The key of the writing having once been found, there was no great difficulty in making out all the words, though the suggested sense was wild and incomprehensible.

This is how the thing read, when written down word by word in English characters:—

“First south of the the in mountains Saghru march you the city broken the the look measure paces man foot at and hundred the four and to of with at over is necklace.”

“*To, of, with, at, over!*” roared Sandy, as if in a violent rage. “What can you do with a crowd of prepositions and a *necklace!* I believe it's all a flam. It must be!”

“Have patience, Sandy. There is surely something fairly definite to hold on to!” said the doctor, with quiet enthusiasm. “The *Jebel Saghru!* And *necklace* is suggestive.”

The Writing on the Parchment 71

Sandy rose and got an atlas, and opened it at a map of North-West Africa.

"Here we are," said he. "*Jebel Sagheru*, slightly different spelling. Of course, they set it down as the same as the Anti-Atlas range, running exactly parallel with the Great Atlas, from south-west to north-east."

"I don't think travellers agree about that," said the doctor. "If you look at the map in Harris's book on *Tafilet* that I lent you, you'll see, if I remember rightly, that he puts the *Jebel Saghru* away further out in the desert, and makes it run pretty well east and west."

Sandy found the book named, turned up the route-map, and saw that the doctor was right.

"Now," said he, "let's look at the French map." He brought it from among loose maps in a drawer, and spread it out. "*Chagheroun*. I suppose that is the same as *Saghru*. But look at the shape and arrangement; and the number of rivers, tribes, mountains they put in anyhow! The French, like Nature, abhor a vacuum; and sooner than leave a map empty, they'll fill it at random or on hearsay."

"So," said the doctor, thoughtfully, "it seems impossible to know at present with any certainty what mountains are the *Jebel Saghru*."

"You speak like a book, my boy," said Sandy, folding all the maps away.

"And it is of no use, Sandy," added the doctor, "to worry over that writing until we can read it along with the two lots of missing words. Those boys must be found, Sandy."

"They *shall* be found," said Sandy. "To-morrow morning I set out to meet them."

But when to-morrow came it brought the necessity for a change both of view and of action. The doctor sat with his brother Jim breakfasting betimes before setting out to see Sandy Peebles off to Paris, when Sandy himself was suddenly announced. He was in a great rage and fume of heat.

"Hullo!" said the doctor. "Something the matter?"

"Everything's the matter!" cried Sandy. "*The Basha leaves Paris at once—to-day—back to Morocco!* By Jingo! we're done. Read that!"

The Writing on the Parchment 73

And he tossed a telegram on the breakfast-table.

The doctor opened the telegram and read in silence. It was an announcement (without any name attached) from Paris of the safe arrival of the two boys, with the news added that the Basha was setting out on his return to Morocco immediately. My readers will remember that this was that same Basha who had intended, it was said, to be present at Queen Victoria's Jubilee, but he lingered so long on the way that he thought it was of no use to come nearer than Paris. There he remained for some days, and then he astonished everybody by going away without doing any of the business for which he professed to have come. The newspapers said he was taken away because he had *gone mad!* We know better; and you now understand that he hastened home to his own country because he thought that in the two kidnapped boys he had secured such rich prizes as were worth all the political business he could accomplish by staying longer.

"Will you sit down and have some breakfast, Sandy?" asked the doctor, quietly.

"Thanks, my boy; I've had breakfast," answered Sandy.

"But you can always eat, you say?"

"So I can," said Sandy, "and I will. I don't know when I may have another meal, and I'd better lay in provision while I may."

"What are you thinking of doing?" asked the doctor. "It's of no use going to Paris now, is it?"

"Not a bit," said Sandy, helping himself to bacon and toast.

"That telegram, you know," said the doctor, "makes me turn things over."

"Turn them carefully, then," said Sandy.

"I will. First of all," said the doctor, "if the Basha hurries off like that he must think he has got all he wants."

"You mean," said Sandy, "the inscriptions on Black and White?"

"I mean the two boys—yes," answered the doctor. "Next," he continued, "he must either have a copy of the third part of the di-

The Writing on the Parchment 75

reactions that I have, or be ignorant that a third part is necessary—in which last case we know more about the business than he knows. By the way, Sandy," asked the doctor, quickly, "I haven't thought of asking you this question: When the Basha's agent engaged you to get hold of the two boys, was there nothing said about the old Jew?"

"Nothing about taking him, if that's what you mean," answered Sandy; "and nothing about taking anything from him but Black and White."

"Then that certainly looks as if they did not know the writing was in more than two parts—don't you think it does?" said the doctor.

"It does, I admit," said Sandy.

"Then," said the doctor, gaily, "I say again, we stand better than the Basha does, though he *has* got hold of Black and White. We know what we want, and he doesn't know what he wants. Besides, the Black and White inscriptions are, like ours, I expect, in English, and it's a hundred, or a thousand, to one

that neither the Basha nor any of his people will be able to make them out."

"They must wait," said Sandy, "till we come. We must follow up, my boy! Pursue—overtake! By Jingo! When I think how they've done me, I want to be up with them!"

"Nothing would be gained," said the doctor, "by hurrying after them now. We must wait two or three days to get everything ready, and then we'll set off together."

CHAPTER VI

“BRO’R SOL”

IT was evident that, whatever haste they made, they could not overtake the Basha before he reached his own country; because a railway journey of a few hours would take him to Marseilles, where there would be, in all probability, a steamer waiting to carry him to Tangier; or if there were not a ship already engaged, one of a regular service could quickly be found.

The doctor and Sandy Peebles, therefore, made deliberate preparations not only for finding the Basha and the kidnapped boys—whom Sandy persistently called “Black and White”—but also for making the perilous journey into the desert in search of the treasure of which the old Jew had spoken.

“To use force is out of the question,” said the doctor, in discussing their procedure. “It can’t be *armis*.”

"I object to Latin," said Jim; "I've had enough of it."

"So have I. And we are English," said Sandy. "We must win by English craft and courage, my boy—most certainly," said he, "craft and courage."

"I had better go as I have gone before," said the doctor, "as a learned Tabeeb, a man of pills and powders. And Jim will be my assistant, and get his hand in. He can be the surgeon of the party."

"Yes," said Jim; "I can cut and cauterise."

"And I," said Sandy, "must be a merchant. What shall I sell? Something bulky, because, when my packs are empty, we shall need them to carry off the treasure, shan't we?"

"Don't count the chickens before they're hatched," smiled the doctor.

"To provide egg-baskets is not to count the chickens, my boy," said Sandy.

"I advise you to sell clocks," said the doctor. "Through the mountains the Berbers are mad for clocks—American clocks and Ger-

man clocks, cheap and gaudy, like those the French send into the desert from Algeria.”

“Clocks be it!” said Sandy. “I’ll get a nice assortment. Two or three camel-loads of them.”

So they debated their arrangements, on the understanding that the party of adventurous spirits would consist of themselves—Suzannah, the daughter of the old Jew, having first been placed with her relatives in Tetuan. But, almost at the last moment, when old Yakoob Bensusan had been buried, Isaac Goldstein petitioned in the most piteous manner that he might accompany them. He did not seem to have any knowledge of the story of the treasure, but he knew that his old friend, Yakoob, had prized the two boys for some mysterious reason; he took great blame to himself that they had been lost, and he wished to help to find them; and to find them he had heard the doctor say was his purpose in going to Morocco. The doctor and Sandy were inclined to entertain his petition, for Isaac had been a good deal in Morocco on business,

and might be an efficient and friendly means of communication with the Jews who abound and flourish in the Atlas Mountains.

"But," asked the doctor, "how can you leave your shop?"

"There ain't much biz doing, doctor," said Isaac. (His Cockney dialect was wonderful.) "And what there is, my bro'r Sol will attend to."

That seemed a sufficient arrangement for his own affairs in London, and the doctor agreed to take him. But in what capacity?

"O my precious dear life! I'm not proud, doctor," said Isaac. "I don't care what I do to get along. I'll be head-cook and bottle-washer, if you like. And, s'welp me! I can cook proper."

So Isaac was engaged as *factotum*, which (as I hope you know) means "doer of everything." The first of his duties was to help Sandy in buying his clocks, and that he did to admiration, choosing gaudier, noisier, and cheaper timepieces than Sandy would have dared to think of.

“They’re *all* right,” said Isaac. “I’ve got my eye on the customers you’ll have. Bless your ‘eart and soul! they don’t want to know the time. Why should they? They ain’t got nothing to do. They only want a thing that looks pretty and makes a noise, and that works the hands round.”

So it came to pass that one day all five of the party—Sandy, the doctor and Jim, Susannah the Jewess and Isaac the Jew—were at Waterloo Station on their way to Southampton to join the P. and O. Steamer. They had no very great amount of baggage, for the bulky packages (Sandy’s crates of clocks among them) had been sent on ahead by goods train.

They steamed away without mishap, the doctor, Sandy, Jim, and the Jewess being in the first saloon, and Isaac Goldstein in the second. On the third day out, when they had crossed the Bay of Biscay and were off the coast of Spain, Isaac came to the doctor with a white face and an agitated manner, and gasped out a strange story.

“O my blessed dear life! I seen him!” he

said. "Him or his ghost! . . . My bro'r Sol! . . . A stoker! . . . On board this ship! . . . I seen him bob up, and when he seen me bob down again! . . . O my dear life! What's he doing it for? . . . I left him looking after the shop! What's he hooked it off for?"

"The first thing must be," said the doctor, "to make sure that the man you have seen is your brother."

"Oh!" said Isaac, "it was Sol, right enough. But the thing is, wot's he doing here? Is he a-follerin' us? Wot for? Some beastly mischief, I lay! But, my dear soul and body, I'll get it outer him!"

Isaac tried to get a sight of his brother, but his brother was not to be seen. He inquired (or *said* he inquired) for him, but could get no information; and of course he was not allowed to explore the engine and furnace rooms to find him.

The doctor also made inquiries of the ship's officers: "Was there a man named Goldstein among the stokers?" There was not. "Was

there a Jew?” It was not likely, but the chief engineer said he would find out. He did, and made answer that there was no stoker answering to the description of Isaac’s brother. They were, therefore, driven to the conclusion that Isaac had been mistaken, and Isaac himself admitted that he must have been. But the mystery of “bro’r Sol” was not yet done with.

When the great P. and O. steamer arrived at Gibraltar, the party disembarked to cross the Strait in the small steamer that plies to Tangier, the one sea-coast town of Morocco that maintains a busy intercourse with Europe.

Tangier has no harbor. It had both pier and a harbor long ago, built by the English when they possessed the place in the reign of Charles II., and destroyed by them when they abandoned it—destroyed that the Moorish pirates, who then infested the seas, might find no shelter there.

The Moors have been too lazy and too careless to trouble to repair what we destroyed.

and the consequence is that now even small ships and steamers have to anchor off shore, and land both goods and passengers in boats and on the backs of men.

Our party of travellers, being heavily weighted with baggage, hung back to let those who were less cumbered land before them.

They thus stood on the deck of the small steamer, looking with interest—Jim especially, to whom everything was wonderfully fresh—looking forth on the white town of Tangier, piled against the slope, and on the green hills behind, beyond which lay waiting the cruelty and mystery of the East, and all the toil and pain of the wild adventure on which the party were set out.

They were thus standing when Isaac startled them by leaning over the bulwark and pointing with loud cries at a man who was being carried ashore on the shoulders of one of the water-porters.

“O my dear life, there he is again! There he goes!” he cried. “My bro’r Sol! My

beastly bro’r Sol! Sol, you villain!” he yelled.

“Wot have you come here for? Wot ’ave you done wiv the shop? Eh? Who’s a-mind-in’ of it? D’ye ’ear? Come back!”

CHAPTER VII

AT THE MOORISH CAFÉ

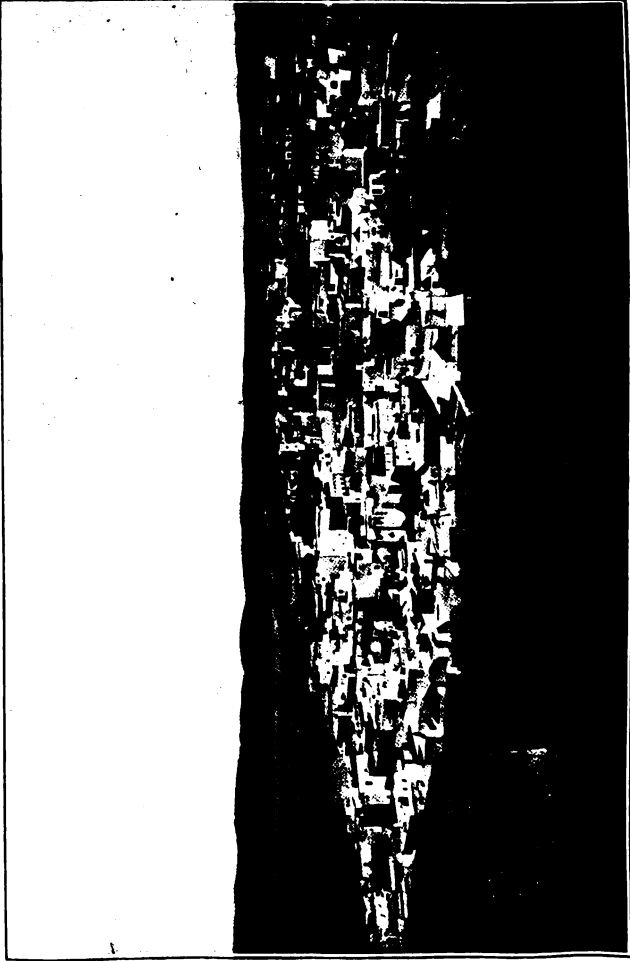
THE man certainly was clothed like a stoker, or under-engineer, and he turned his head when he heard the frantic cries of Isaac, but he neither paused nor came back. And by the time the doctor's party had landed he had, of course, completely disappeared. Isaac Goldstein might have been mistaken, but all the same it would have been more satisfying to have had some means of being resolved whether he was or not. Had "bro'r Sol" been aboard the P. and O. steamer in spite of their attempts to discover him? If he had, how had he transferred himself, without apparent difficulty, to the small Tangier boat? And why, if it were he, was he making this secret visit to Morocco at the same time as themselves? These were distinctly anxious questions, and Isaac did not hesitate to give them disquieting answers.

“’Pon my sacred davy, doctor,” he declared, “he don’t mean no good! You’ll see! My bro’r Sol has always been a unlucky bro’r to me! Always! He’s a bad lot, he is! He’ll do something nasty! You mark my words, doctor!”

That was not a hopeful beginning for their adventure, especially since, if Sol Goldstein had indeed passed ashore before them, there was no telling or guessing where he might break out next. According to Isaac’s account, Sol had betrayed old Yakoob Bensusan to the Moorish Basha (though Sandy Peebles knew nothing of that), and he might well put himself in communication with the Basha concerning the doctor’s movements.

But they forgot “bro’r Sol” in the excitement of landing, and passing themselves and their baggage through the custom-house, which is a wretched shed on the stinking Marina (or strand), where squatted, at the receipt of custom, large, turbaned, long-bearded Moors, looking like benevolent patriarchs out of Bible pictures, but having little benevo-

lence or Bible in their hearts. Once within the ruinous rubble of white-washed wall, the utter strangeness of the place from anything in Europe broke upon the company. It was not new to any but Jim Greathed, and he viewed everything with giddy wonder—the streets, which are narrow, sunless, rock-paved alleys, festering with refuse, with blank, blind walls of houses, or with shops like holes in the walls, where squatted more turbaned patriarchs, who looked as if it were a matter of indifference to them whether they sold anything from their meagre stock or not; the people stalking along in voluminous drapery and dragging heelless slippers; the women with muffled faces, furtive and ghost-like, or rather like bundles of frowsy linen marching to the wash, and the men with the swelling pride of Pharisees; while now and then a camel, with craned neck and mumbling lips, would stride along, solemn, slow, stupid, and inevitable as Fate, his burden slung on either side of him, making it necessary that you should squeeze yourself flat against the wall to let him pass,



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8 1

and even then be in danger of having your features scraped off. Jim exclaimed at his first experience of the real camel who had come straight from the desert.

“How terribly old he looks!” said he.

“Looks like a second-hand hair-trunk,” said Sandy Peebles.

“I have been here two or three times,” said the doctor, “but it always comes fresh to me. I feel, as Mark Twain says, like being taken by the scruff of the neck and set down in the middle of the Old Testament. The people here live the life of a thousand years ago.”

“In a few years,” said Sandy, “when France has seized on this country—as she’s sure to do—there will be a railroad from Tangier to Morocco, packed with Cook’s excursionists; the Puffing Billy will take the place of the slow camel, and the thousand-year-old habits will disappear.”

“What an awful pity that will be!” exclaimed Jim.

“It can’t be helped, I suppose,” said Sandy, sagely. “It is what we call the ‘march of

civilisation.' I'm not fond of civilisation. I agree with the folk here. They never do to-day what they can put off till to-morrow."

"They always behave," said the doctor, "as if Time were Eternity and Life a Dream—as if nothing mattered."

"Excepting killing and stealing," said Sandy grimly. "And of their quickness in these things we may have plenty of experience before we are done with them."

"I wonder," said Jim, "if Isaac's brother is really here, and what he means by it?"

"Ah!" said Sandy, "if Isaac's bro'r is at all like Isaac, we must keep our eyes open."

They went to the Hotel de Printemps. As soon as they were established there the doctor made inquiries concerning the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa, who had left Paris in such haste. The manager of the hotel knew nothing about him, except that he had arrived several days before; he believed, however, he must have gone on to Fez, to the Sultan. The doctor, however, found an old Moorish porter of the hotel, who told him that the

Basha was still in Tangier; he was in the upper town, resting with the governor in the kasbah. He knew not why the Basha had not gone forward. Probably he would travel "to-morrow," if it was the will of God and of the Sultan.

"Always to-morrow!" said the doctor to Sandy, in relating what he had heard. "Everything is done to-morrow. This is the land of to-morrow."

They took counsel together, and knowing the difficulty of getting genuine Moorish news in European dress or in European company, they arranged that they would that very evening sally forth in Moorish guise and visit a Moorish *café* they knew of where only Moors did congregate.

"*Il faut raser la tête*," said Sandy, tenderly handling his stiff crop of hair; "it is necessary to shave the head."

"And, for you, the beard also," said the doctor. "That flaming ensign of yours would be sure to get you suspected."

"Never!" said Sandy. "Have you forgot-

ten that there was once a Red Sultan, with a beard as red as mine?"

So, with shaved heads but unshaved beards, and in Moorish dress of haik and turban, they set out after dark to stumble and fumble their way to the little-known Moorish *café*. Had there not been moonlight they would probably have never found their way through the narrow, uneven, and tortuous lanes; but at length they did come to the place of their search.

It was a part of a street covered in by interlaced boughs, on which the withered leaves still rustled. Beneath this canopy of protection from the ill effects of the moonlight a number of Moors were lying about, some singing, and others asleep. They were an unprepossessing lot of men to be alone with, for doubtless some of them were thieves and murderers, and they were ruffians all.

At first, on entering from the white moonlight, you could only distinguish their white turbans and teeth, but gradually their dark and stalwart figures became evident.

Entering a door on one side of this covered

place, the doctor and Sandy found themselves in a small room with whitewashed walls and matted floor. Men were squatting here and there, making cigarettes and drinking out of small brass cups thick black coffee, mixed with the grounds, in the Turkish fashion. There was the usual charcoal stove for boiling the coffee, and the room, dimly lighted by a stinking oil-lamp, had a lugubrious and forbidding appearance. The half-darkness, however, and the drowsy fumes of the charcoal were of advantage, for, under their influence, the frequenters of the place were less likely to suspect their visitors.

“Peace be with you!” murmured the doctor and Sandy in salutation when they entered.

“Peace,” murmured the others, turning their sleepy dark eyes upon them.

“What news, O *Lihyat Hamad* (Red Beard)?” asked the keeper of the *café*, busy at his stove.

“The news, O burner of coffee,” said Sandy, “is that the great Basha, Mohammed Misfiwa, who has returned from the land of the

Roumin, so adores the red beards of the infidel that he will counsel our lord the Sultan (Allah preserve his days!) to cause all men to dye their beards red. Therefore, O slave of the charcoal-stove, I am already in the fashion."

"*Kah! Kah!*" laughed the coffee-maker. And "*Kah! Kah!*" laughed the company.

"But thou hast, in truth," said a grey-bearded elder, "the reddest beard I have ever seen on man's face! It is red as fire!"

"It is indeed fire, O father of greyness!" said Sandy. "For when I travel with my friend here, who is a Tabeeb, he has no need of a charcoal-stove to heat his irons for cauterising wounds—he but thrusts them into my beard!"

"*Kah! Kah!*" they laughed again. It was the kind of joke that the humbler sort of Moors love.

"But, to speak in all seriousness, O father of greyness," continued Sandy, "hast thou never heard of a Sultan of long ago, even Mulai Yezeed, who had a redder beard than

mine? It was truly redder than the flames of Gehenna, and fiery as his temper. Also there is, as all men should know, a tribe in the mountains beyond Fez, who have red beards all; and they are called the Zaar."

"And art thou of the Zaar, O master?" asked the coffee-maker.

"I am of the kindred of the Zaar,"* said Sandy, solemnly, "who are eaters of fire, and dispensers of fire and sword."

The company looked with respect on a man who had so much knowledge, and who was a fire-eater, by his own report; and while Sandy and the doctor sipped their muddy coffee, they talked of beards and dead sultans and mountain tribes to their hearts' content. But having thus established themselves on a jovial friendly footing, the doctor was anxious to bring the talk back to the Basha.

"We travel on our business to Fez as soon as may be," he ventured to say, "and we desire if possible to have the protection of the company of the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa on

* Zaar=fair-haired.

the way. Has any man heard when he will set out?"

"I have heard, O Tabeeb," answered the grey-beard without hesitation, "that the Basha lingers in the kasbah because he is as in a cleft stick. He hath brought for the Sultan, it is said, out of the land of the Franks, certain strange documents which he nor no man can read; and he fears, it is said, to go into the presence of his master, our lord, the Commander of the Faithful (may Allah prolong his days!) without the interpretation of the documents in his hand or on his tongue."

"Lo, this is strange news!" exclaimed both the doctor and Sandy, who had instantly suspected what the strange documents were.

"Yea," cackled on the old man, now excited by the interest aroused in the new-comers; "and day and night are talebs* and wise fakirs from the mosques and the schools up in the kasbah poring on the documents to discover the interpretation thereof."

That was news indeed, and to both Sandy

*Taleb=scribe, or teacher.

and the doctor the meaning of it was plain. They had heard enough, and as speedily as possible they took their leave. When they went out they found the shelter under the boughs deserted. They did not like that. Where were the ruffians who had seemed to have established themselves for the night? Were they lurking in some darker stop for the unwary night-pilgrim? They returned heedfully on their way to the hotel, with their Moorish daggers loose in their sheaths to resist attack.

But, in spite of this care, they were caught. In an exceedingly noisome and uncommonly dark and tortuous lane, they were pounced on from dark niches on either side, received each a well-aimed, stunning blow on the head, and fell like logs. Sandy was not completely unconscious.

“Not the Red Beard,” he believed he heard a familiar voice say in Moghrebbin—“the other!”

He strove to rise, and received another knock, which made the blood sing in his ears, and abolished consciousness.

“Hallo, Sandy!” a voice was presently saying in his ear, “wake up!”

He came to himself and murmured a reply. It was his companion that had spoken.

“We’re the victims of a conspiracy, Sandy!” said the doctor, with quiet energy. “This is not common robbery! They’ve taken nothing from me but *the old Jew’s piece of parchment!* I wore it, as he did, on the arm! See if you have lost anything!”

Sandy had lost nothing. So the only thing stolen was the precious bit of writing!

CHAPTER VIII

"SOL'D AGAIN!"

IT was with pain and difficulty that Sandy and the doctor made their way back to their hotel. But finally they did arrive there. They were as sore in mind as they were in head, but they thought it prudent to tell the people little of what had happened. They merely said they had been set upon by some Moorish ruffians, but had escaped with a few painful blows.

"O my blessed dear life!" cried Isaac Goldstein, when he saw their broken heads and their pale faces. "But you *'ave* been bashed, doctor! You won't stand it, will yer? You'll go to the embassy, won't yer? and make a row, and get the sleepy old hunks of a governor poked up!"

"What a fearful draught!" cried Sandy, to Isaac's astonishment. Sandy pretended to have just discovered Isaac. "It's your mouth,

Isaac!" he said. "I knew there was something open that should be shut."

"Yes," said the doctor, quietly; "look here, Isaac. We're not going to make a row at the embassy nor anywhere else. We're going to say nothing about this. It would spoil our game here altogether to be publicly known and spoken about. You understand—not a word."

"Right y'are, guv'nor!" said Isaac.

Isaac, however, begged to hear what had happened; but to him the doctor did not reveal that he had been robbed of the precious legacy of the old Jew.

"I shouldn't wonder if my beastly bro'r Sol wasn't at the bottom of it!" said Isaac, with an ominous wag of his head.

To his brother only and to the old Jew's daughter, Susannah, did the doctor tell (with a pledge of secrecy) the whole truth. To Susannah he described his loss as "something of great value which was given me by your father, and which deeply concerns you."

"O yes, I know, Sidi Tabeeb," she aston-

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“What a fearful draught!” cried Sandy, to Isaac's astonishment. Sandy pretended to have just discovered Isaac. “It's your mouth,

besides, we have the English copy of your lost bit of writing."

"But if the Basha has all three together, he may make the whole sense out."

"Not as long as he sets men who only know Arabic to read them, my boy," answered Sandy.

But again they had evidence that some subtle enemy was at hand. Next morning early there rode up to the Hotel de Printemps a cavalcade of Moors, whose leader alighted and begged to be allowed to have a word with the two Englishmen ("one with a flaming beard, the other dark as an Arab") who talked Mogh-rebbin, and who had visited a Moorish *café* the evening before. Of course he was at once led to the presence of the doctor and Sandy.

These two were debating how Susannah was to be conveyed to her own people at Tetuan when the Moor—a young and handsome man, tall and slender, with dark, melancholy eyes, and the sweetest of smiles—stood before them, introduced by the keeper of the hotel himself. They rose to receive him, wonder-

ing what might be the meaning of his visit, but disarmed of suspicion by his soft, subtle, and winning manner. He astonished them by asking if they preferred to talk in French or in Moghrebbin.

“My body and my dress,” he explained in very bad French, but with his winning smile, “are of *El Moghreb* but my heart is of Europe. I have been in Paris, the great city, with His Excellency the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa; and I would prefer to dwell in Paris rather than in this ancient, dull place, where nothing is.”

The doctor finding his queer French difficult to follow, said he and his friend would prefer to continue the conversation in Moghrebbin. And so, after a little while, in Moghrebbin he stated the errand he had come on.

“His Excellency the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa has heard that my lords wish to travel to Fez. His Excellency loves all men of Europe; he treasures the memory and the thought of them, he is devoted to them, all that he has is theirs, and he longs for the

company of my lords to beguile the tedious journey to Fez. He recommends them, however, for their entire comfort and safety, to wear our Moorish dress, that they may pass for true believers. His Excellency will receive my lords in audience—to hear their words of wisdom and their necessities of business—if they will give themselves the trouble to climb the hill to the kasbah and visit him there.”

“And when,” asked the doctor, “does his Excellency give audience?”

“His Excellency the Basha,” answered the young Moor, “will give my lords audience at the third hour before noon, if they will then give him the light of their countenance and the illumination of their wisdom.”

The young gentleman maintained his politeness till the end, and when he was going sought to kiss the doctor and Sandy on the cheek in the French fashion of male embrace. When he had departed, before the clatter of the horses of the cavalcade had begun to sound in the street, Sandy turned to the doctor, with

an intense expression as of fury in his eye and in his voice: it was Sandy’s way.

“Now, what in the world, and in the name of wonder,” he demanded, “is the meaning of this move?”

“It’s very curious,” said the doctor.

“Brother Sol again, I suppose!” said Sandy. “’Pon my blessed dear life, as Isaac says, I have a strong desire to meet brother Sol, and pull the long nose he is sticking into other folks’ business.”

“It’s very curious,” repeated the doctor. “We had better go,” he added.

“Oh! on all accounts,” said Sandy, “we had better go. The Moors can’t dare to do anything to us, even if they want to, within easy cry of the British Embassy; and besides, it’s something to get inside the Basha’s door: it brings us nearer to Black and White.”

“Suppose,” said the doctor, “the Basha should ask *us* to translate or interpret the inscriptions that his Talebs and Fakirs have failed to make out?”

“Ah!” said Sandy, with a grim mouth.

"All the same," he added, after considering a moment, "I think we had better go, my boy. This is the leading of Providence, as people used to say about such a thing, and I believe in an extempore obedience to the dictation of Providence. When you're closed in with difficulty and mystery, if you find an open door, go in; that's always my principle."

"Here is certainly an open door," said the doctor; "but we've no idea what's within."

"We must risk making the discovery," said Sandy.

They set the whole matter before Jim, and left him in charge of the lovely Susannah (a responsibility from which Jim was not averse), and then, in their Moorish dress, and on hired horses, accompanied by Isaac Goldstein as a servant or dragoman, in native Jewish attire, the doctor and Sandy set off to the kasbah.

The kasbah, or castle, is built upon a hill, and it overlooks and dominates Tangier as the old town of Boulogne overlooks and dominates the new. It consists of a ruckle of rather mean-looking buildings, encircled by



AT THE FOOT OF THE KASBAH, TANGIERS.

1943
MAY 15 1943
U.S. AIR FORCE
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walls, old and broken, within which the native government of Tangier, with its accompanying soldiery and prisoners, is housed. The doctor and Sandy, on approaching the dark gateway, with its horseshoe top, turned together to glance back over the town. Their eyes were dazzled by the snowy whiteness of the roofs and buildings, which was here and there relieved only by the green of a fig-tree struggling up between walls.

“It’s a white sepulchre!” exclaimed Sandy, letting his view fly farther off to the glancing blue of the sea and the vague cloud on the horizon which represented Europe, and divided the blue above from the blue below.

“Now we enter the jaws of the wild beast,” said the doctor, as they turned again to enter.

“The beast won’t dare to close its jaws, my boy,” said Sandy.

The doctor made no answer, and they passed the two drowsy sentinels wrapped in ragged jelabs, and entered the great square.

It was empty and deserted, save for some beggars, stretched flat on the ground, scorched

by the sun, and eaten up with flies. Crossing this great square they dismounted, and left their horses and Isaac in the charge of the ragged soldiers on guard.

Then, without a word, they were conducted by one of these guards to a door adorned with arabesques. At their approach it opened as if by enchantment, and crossing a white and empty chamber they entered an inner court, in the midst of which was a broken, waterless fountain.

There more soldiers were loafing about or leaning against pillars, quite still, and with eyes fixed as if in a dream. The young Moor who had visited them at the hotel came to meet them, and led them forward across a garden and through another door into a spacious hall. Their first impression, after leaving the glaring sunlight, was of a soft gloom and coolness, and their next of a great confusion of people in loose robes and crowned with huge turbans, and a wonderful burst of colour, as of a mixed and gorgeous flower-bed.

They were led to the end of the hall,

through the host of coloured robes, into a small ante-room or alcove.

There was no one there at first, and they looked round. The floor was covered with matting, none too fresh or clean. The walls were white and bare, and against one were ranged a yellow satin sofa and chairs—an English or French drawing-room suite; in one corner, a small brass bedstead with bed, and beside the bed, on a tray, a silver tea or coffee service. Presently two Moors, in great white muslin turbans and ample robes of fine transparent stuff, and the inevitable yellow, heelless slippers, stalked in and squatted together on the yellow satin sofa.

“The dark one,” whispered the young Moor to the doctor and Sandy, “is the kaid, the Governor of Tangier, the other—the grey one—is His Excellency the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa.”

On “the grey one,” therefore, the doctor and Sandy fixed their keenest attention. He was a handsome old man, with a white beard and a complexion as soft and clear as a child’s,

dark eyes of great vivacity, and a large smiling mouth, which showed two rows of fine white teeth. He had eye-glasses and a snuff-box, and little polite motions of head and hands.

He seemed altogether a most pleasant, suave, and courtly person. Also, a man of craft, with "the hand of steel in the velvet glove." His companion was a remarkable contrast. Very handsome he was, too; younger and fiercer. He was middle-aged, with black beard and dark complexion, muscular of figure, sombre and silent of countenance. He looked as if he had never smiled; he sat for the most part with his brow bent and with his eyes on the ground, but when he raised them they seemed to blaze and sparkle with such ferocity and restrained hatred of the foreigners—the infidels from Europe—that the doctor and Sandy began to wonder whether this interview might not have a disagreeable ending.

"The two Sidis, sons of the English, have arrived," announced the young Moor.

“You are welcome, Sidis,” said the Basha, smiling so as to show amiably all his teeth, and waving his visitors to chairs.

They sat down, and there was a moment’s silence while the young Moor withdrew; the old Basha twirled his eye-glasses, and the governor raised on them a dark look of hatred and disgust.

“You speak the Moghrebbin and you read the Arabic?” inquired the smiling old Basha.

“We do, your excellency,” answered the doctor.

“You have been, then, in this land before?” said the Basha.

“Twice, yea thrice, have I travelled and dwelt in this land before,” answered the doctor.

“And the owner of the red beard?” asked the Basha, smiling.

“I, also, excellency,” said Sandy, “know this land and love this people.”

The governor raised his eyes and looked as if he would say, “What right have you—in-fidel dog!—to love this people? They neither

seek nor need the love of an unbelieving son of the English!"

"And what," asked the Basha, as if suddenly attracted to Sandy, "has the Red One come to this land for again?"

"I have come, excellency," said Sandy, with solemnity, "to sell clocks."

"Clocks!" exclaimed the Basha, taking a pinch of snuff. "And wherefore clocks?"

Sandy answered promptly, and as if brusquely, in his rasping voice, while the governor watched him with suspicion: "That all the people of this land, excellency, who may be able to buy clocks, may learn the value of time, and may know that yesterday, once gone, is dead, and that to-morrow cannot be counted on."

"But yesterday," said the Basha, smiling, "was the father of to-day, and so lives in it."

"True, excellency," said Sandy; "and to-day may be the father of to-morrow. But as yesterday is dead, so to-morrow may not be born."

"It is true," said the governor, in a deep

solemn voice, and that was the one thing he said to Sandy; “to-day is the time for action.”

And he straightened himself, as if ready to act.

“And you, Sidi,” asked the Basha of the doctor, “what is your occupation?”

“I, your excellency,” answered the doctor, “am a Healer of Sickness—a *Tabeeb*.”

“A *Tabeeb*!” exclaimed the Basha. “And does the Sidi propose to heal all the sick people of El Moghreb?”

“Nay, your excellency,” answered the doctor. “I have been in this land, and I come again, to travel and to find health.”

“*Wealth*, the Sidi surely means!” said the Basha with a smile.

“Health, O Basha,” said the doctor, somewhat startled by the plain allusion to treasure-seeking, but he kept calm. “Health is to the sick man who gains it greater wealth than all the treasure guarded by Djins or buried by the Roumi.”

“Health,” murmured the governor, in his

deep voice, "is the gift of God." And he counted his beads.

The Basha took a pinch of snuff, and looked at the doctor with a broad, quizzical smile, and the doctor looked at the Basha.

"You have a desire to travel to Fez in my company," said the Basha.

"We have ventured to utter the desire, excellency," said the doctor.

"It shall be granted," said the Basha, "and more; you shall go with me as far as Marakesh."

Both the doctor and Sandy stared in surprise, and listened with anxiety to the development of the Basha's statement.

"But Marakesh, O Basha," the doctor felt bound to say, "is beyond our desire."

"So much the greater is the benefit I confer," said the Basha, still smiling. "We travel this night," he added, and continued to smile. "It has been well said by your friend, the Red One, that to-day is the time for action."

"To-day is the time for action," repeated the governor, solemnly.

“Then, excellency,” said the doctor, beginning to fear how this might end, “permit us to depart to prepare for the journey.” He rose and Sandy rose. “We beg to take leave of your excellency,” he said.

“You must not go,” said the Basha, and smiled. “Your servant, the Jew, will return and make your preparations. You *cannot* go.”

He waved his hands round, and the doctor and Sandy, turning together, saw that the door was beset with guards, armed with long guns and sabres.

“Do you make us prisoners, Basha?” demanded Sandy, in his biggest voice.

“Nay,” smiled the Basha, “I would insist upon your remaining my guests.”

“We are English subjects,” cried Sandy. “You *dare* not keep us, Basha!”

“The embassy and the Bashador,” said the Basha, continuing his smile, “know nothing of you. You have come to this land in secret, like thieves in the night. The embassy knows you not, therefore the embassy will never miss you!”

The doctor and Sandy looked at each other.

What the Basha said was quite true; they were prisoners, and they could find no redress. Moreover, to seek rescue or redress through the British Embassy (and by the agency of Isaac Goldstein) would be to spoil the purpose with which they had come to Morocco.

"We're sold again!" murmured Sandy in English. "Bro'r *Sol'd!*"

"Is this a time for your beastly bad puns?" exclaimed the doctor.

CHAPTER IX

SUSANNAH

SUSANNAH BENSUSAN and Jim Greathed—she sixteen, and he (as his brother said) “barely twenty”—sat together in the shaded room of the Hôtel de Printemps, eating sweets (which Jim had bought) and chattering together and laughing. They were truly only boy and girl, though both seemed full-grown, and they were quite simply and openly pleased with each other.

Jim considered Susannah the loveliest creature he had ever set eyes on (“Spiffing!” was his choicest term of delight and admiration), and Susannah thought Jim the most handsome and adorable youth possible: he was so remarkably different from a Jewish youth.

They sat thus, engrossed and delighted with each other’s company, saying nothing in particular, but inwardly meaning a great deal,

when Isaac Goldstein suddenly appeared before them.

"Hullo!" cried Jim. "Where's my brother and Sandy Peebles?"

Isaac was unutterably solemn and dignified. He looked an instant at Jim and an instant at Susannah before he made answer.

"They're *all* right," said he, at length—"there at the kasbah, cobbing and nobbing, and touching glasses with the Basha and the governor, and they want you to go up and join the jolly company. I shouldn't be surprised if they didn't wind up with a sing-song."

"Did my brother send you with that message to me?" asked Jim, sorely puzzled.

"He did, Mister Jim," answered Isaac. "He says to me, 'Isaac,' he says, 'you go and tell my bro'r Jim, Isaac,' he says. And you, Susannah," he said, turning quickly to the girl, whose large dark eyes were fixed on him, "I've got to give you in charge of Moses Secsu—you know and I know who I mean—and he'll see you 'ome to Tetuan."

"Isaac Goldstein," said the girl, only half

understanding his strange English, but reading his face with her clear, bright eyes, "you are telling lies!"

Isaac looked at the girl a moment, but it was not to her but to Jim he made his answer. "S'welp me, it's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! Look, here are the doctor's keys and Mr. Peebles' keys. They give them to me to get their things packed ready!—everything!—because we're all a-goin' to travel with the Basha!—all 'cept this girl, and she's a-goin to be handed over to Moses Secsu to be took to Tetuan."

"Isaac Goldstein!" exclaimed Susannah again, "you continue! You tell lies! Listen, Isaac Goldstein!" she began, in the tongue of her own people, glancing first at Jim as if to ensure that he could not understand. The precaution was not necessary, for Jim understood not a single word of all that ensued, and he could guess no more from the tones and behaviour of the two than that Susannah was rating Isaac and calling him names—him and his brother Sol. This is how the rating went on:

"I do not believe a word you have said, Isaac Goldstein. You play tricks with the English gentlemen!"

"O my blessed dear life! What do you mean, girl?"

"Ah! Isaac Goldstein, I have seen more than you think."

"What have you seen? Come now, what?"

"When my poor dead father was talking important things to the Mister Doctor, I saw you pass into your shop and climb up and look in and listen through the open piece of glass between the shop and the room at the back where my poor father lay."

"O my blessed dear life! I never!—I never!"

"You know all about the little silk bag!"

"O my precious soul and body! What silk bag? Where was the silk bag?"

"Oh! Isaac Goldstein! It is of no use that you lie to me, because I know the kind of man you are! And I am ashamed—and my dear father was always ashamed—that so many of our people are of your kind!"

“Oh, what a wicked girl! The curse will be upon you,” cried Isaac in some terror, “if you slander the sons of your people to the Gentiles!”

“I know all that,” said Susannah, “and that is why I have not already told the English gentlemen what I have seen and what I think.”

“Oh! you think, do you? You think! And what is it that you think?”

“I think that you on purpose deceived the gentlemen about your brother Sol. You knew there was no brother Sol on board the ship. And I very much think there is no brother Sol anywhere!”

“O my blessed dear life! What will this terrible girl say next? Who is my brother then, if it is not Sol?”

“I do not know that you have a brother. I have never seen him, have I?”

“O my precious soul and body! Many a time! In the shop! You have heard me call him Sol. ‘Sol, my boy,’ I used to say, ‘do this,’ or ‘do that.’ I used to call him ‘My

boy.' That's what I used to call him for short."

"It may be," said Susannah, simply. "I do not remember much of your shop. But if he was in your shop, I am certain, as I live, that he was not on the ship! And you deceived the English gentlemen about it, because you were planning to steal the little silk bag from the Mister Doctor, and to betray them both to the Basha!"

"O my precious soul alive! What lies! what terrible lies!"

"What you have done I do not know, but I suspect! And well you know, you bad Isaac, that I tell no lies."

"Lies! lies! lies! All lies!" cried Isaac, quite frantic. "And now, because you cannot go to the Mister Doctor to tell these lies, you will tell them to his brother? But no, no! That I will stop! You shall at once go to Moses Secsu, and be packed off to your own family at Tetuan!"

"Isaac Goldstein," said the girl, "do not make me angry. If you make me angry, I do

not know what I may do. I may even tell the English gentlemen all that I know and think. At present I have no mind to tell them, because I am ashamed that one of our people should be so bad and mean a traitor. But, Isaac Goldstein, listen to me! If you do not change, and be good, and behave well, I shall tell everything I know and think. For—be quiet!—I shall not go home to Tetuan, I shall not go to Moses Secsu, and I shall go along with you and the English gentlemen wherever they go, and make sure that you do not play the traitor. Now I have spoken. I am my father's daughter, and you will say no more, but see that you behave honestly."

While Isaac was exclaiming to himself, "O my blessed dear life! who'd have thought she was such a spitfire of a little lady?" she turned to Jim with a bright smile, and spoke in her somewhat difficult English—difficult for her to speak, not for others to understand:

"I have say to Isaac Goldstein I will go not to Moses Secsu. I go not to Tetuan. I go with you, Mister Jim, and with the Mister

Doctor, and with the Mister Sandy—where you go they go I go.”

“Bravo!” cried Jim. “That’s spiffing, Susannah—simply scrumptious! But what’s this about my going up to the kasbah, and our all setting out to-night with the Basha?”

Susannah looked at Isaac, and said in her own tongue:

“You had better tell some of the truth.”

Isaac obeyed the admonition.

“The fact is, Mister Jim,” said he, “your bro’r the doctor and Mister Sandy, they can’t ’elp theirselves. That’s the fact, ’pon my precious dear life! The Basha—crafty old cove he is!—has got ’em, and he means to keep ’em.”

“Keep them?” cried Jim. “Do you mean they are prisoners. But we’ll see if he’ll keep them! I’ll go and complain at the British Embassy, and we’ll have them out of the kasbah like winking.”

“O my blessed dear life! You mustn’t do that, Mister Jim. Your bro’r the doctor don’t want you to do that! ’Cos why? If the em-

bassy interfered, his balloon would be bust! No, Mister Jim, you mustn't go to the embassy. And, bless your heart and soul alive, the Basha won't hurt them nor you, 'cos I can tell you he wants to make use of them! And what your bro'r the doctor and Mister Sandy 'll do is to go with him nice and quick and quiet to Marakesh—wot you call Morocco—and then 'ook it! Least, that 'd be my tip."

"And I'm to go up to the kasbah at once?" said Jim, rising, as if to get ready.

"But not in them togs, Mister Jim," answered Isaac. "You must put on the Moorish clo' your bro'r got for you."

"And what will Susannah do?" asked Jim, turning suddenly to survey her—in the dress common for Jewish women in Morocco.

"Oh! Susannah!" cried Isaac, in a tone that meant, "There's no saying what Susannah may do!"

"But," said Jim, "*she* can't go to the kasbah like that, can she? They wouldn't let her in, would they—a woman, and a Jewish woman, too?"

"Oh! they'd let her in!" said Isaac, in a tone that implied the addition: "but that might be the end of her."

"Listen, Isaac Goldstein," said Susannah, in her own speech. "You are not behaving well, Isaac! You will behave well to me, and do what I bid you, or I will tell all I know and think to Mister Jim, and afterwards to the Mister Doctor and Mister Sandy! You will not any more think me a girl, because I am not; and you will do what I bid. You hear—you Isaac? You will go out to the shops this instant and you will buy for me the dress of a Moorish youth—turban, chaumir, and jelab—and I will put them on and wear them; for I must go to the kasbah as the new-hired Moorish boy of Mister Jim."

"O my blessed dear life!" cried Isaac. "But you will be found out——"

"I am not a fool, Isaac, and I am resolved to go where the English gentlemen go; and so are you resolved, I know. If you are faithful and keep a discreet tongue, I shall not be found out. But if I am found out, then I

shall know you have been unfaithful, and I shall tell all to the English gentlemen; and I think the terrible Mister Sandy will kill you!"

"O my precious dear life!" cried Isaac. "Why did not Yakoob leave this beast of a girl at Tetuan with her grandmother?"

"That I might bear you company on this journey, Isaac," said Susannah, "and keep you in the difficult path of honest conduct!"

Three hours later, in the heat of the afternoon, a cavalcade of seven donkeys left the hotel and climbed slowly to the kasbah.

Four of the donkeys were laden with packs, and three were ridden, one by Isaac the Jew, and two by youths in Moorish dress. One of the 'youths' was, of course, Susannah in her Moorish garb.

CHAPTER X

A GAME AT BALL

"GOD is great! Prayer is better than sleep!
Allah-il-Allah! Allah-hu!"

These were the strange words, uttered in a long, shivering wail, which broke upon the drowsy ear of Jim Greathed. Where was he? And whence came the hoarse, wailing cry? He was just coming to himself when another voice, and the feeble illumination of a dim lamp, brought recollection back to him.

"O my dear life, Mister Jim, what a sleepy-head!" said the voice. "All the blessed kasbah been awake and kicking for more'n a hour!"

Jim was lying on a mat-bed in a small chamber in the kasbah, and he had been waked before the dawn by the cry of the muezzin from the top of the minaret of the kasbah mosque. In spite of all efforts at haste, the Basha was not yet set out on the road to Fez;

but his departure had only been put off from sunset to sunrise. And now, it was plain, all was bustle of preparation. There, Jim now perceived, was Isaac Goldstein come to rouse him; and who was the pretty youth in Moorish dress that followed? Who, indeed, but Susannah in her boy's disguise? Then from a chamber or alcove beyond came the hoarse roar of a great voice.

“What a fearful draught! Drop that curtain!”

And Jim remembered all that had occurred after reaching the kasbah the afternoon before. The doctor had at first been troubled by the appearance of Susannah; but since she was there, and declared her firm resolution not to leave them, but to share whatever might happen to the English gentlemen, there was nothing to be done but accept her presence with grace and courage. Besides, she was evidently a girl of spirit, and she would probably be a help rather than a hindrance to the party.

As for Jim himself, he did not dislike the

semi-captivity which his brother had called upon him to share. The Basha had received him kindly—had, indeed, seemed to have taken a liking to him—and at supper-time he had sent him a dish of sweet-stuff from his own table, which Susannah had gladly helped him to consume.

So Jim arose with the alacrity of youth, inspired with hope and dreams, and joined in the general bustle of preparation. And then within an hour the whole expedition passed through the outward gate of Tangier, just as the first rays of the rosy dawn shot over Jebel Moosa, the Hill of the Apes, the African Pillar of Hercules.

In front rode a big negro bearing the Basha's flag; then a rabble of laden camels, bubbling and grunting, packed donkeys braying their best and angriest, and drivers and porters yelling and whacking. After the noisy rabble rode the Basha and his household and suite, silent and dignified in white turbans and jelabs, among whom was notable a white-bearded, fierce eyed Taleb or scribe, who,

with his religious pride, his beads, and his phylactery, made one think of the Pharisee of the Gospel story. Next came the Basha's guests, or captives, silent also, and for the most part depressed and anxious. Last of all came an escort of Moorish cavalry, carrying long, ornamented firelocks, and awkward sabres slung at their backs, hilt downwards.

"May Allah give you a safe journey and prolong your days, O Basha!" cried the old porter as he held the heavy, rotten gates back to let the party pass through.

The Basha's horse stumbled as he passed through the gateway, and the Basha lost temper at the bad omen.

"May Allah pierce you through with colic, you clumsy brute!" he cried, plucking at the reins and striking with his long spike spurs, and the scared and wounded beast bounded forward.

They passed through the outer market-place, where rows of tall Riffians in their hooded cloaks, or jelabs, stood leaning on their hoes, waiting to be hired as gardeners.

“A safe journey O Basha!” they cried in their bad Moghrebbin, for the Riffians are as different from the Moors or Arabs of Morocco as the Highlanders of Scotland are from the Lowlanders, or as the Welsh are from the English, and among themselves they speak their own ancient language.

The Basha passed on in silence. The whole cavalcade marched away over the hill and past the Mohammedan burying-ground, and out upon what is called the Road of the Ambassadors. It is truly not a road at all in our sense, but merely a wide track, trodden hard by the innumerable feet of men and beasts passing to and fro for generations between Fez and Tangier. With the open country thus before them, and a fresh breeze blowing from the sea on their right, the beasts subdued their bubbling and grunting, their mumbling and grumbling, and settled down briskly to their journey.

The doctor and Sandy rode together, silent and troubled. After them rode Jim and Susannah, talking and laughing. No sense of trouble touched them. Before them, right

forward among the porters and the baggage, was Isaac Goldstein, in company with the four asses and the two camels that carried all their belongings.

"It is of no use worrying, Sandy," said the doctor, after a long while. "They're sure to be somewhere in the company."

By "they" the doctor meant the two boys whom they knew as "Black and White." Both the doctor and Sandy had fully expected when they were detained by the Basha that it was because he was determined to have their aid in reading the Black and White inscription, as well as to keep them from pursuing their own way in search of the treasure, but up to that moment the Basha had required nothing of them, and they had seen nothing of Black and White.

"I'm not so sure of that," growled Sandy, in reply. "There is no reason why he should not have chopped them up into little pieces and thrown them on the rubbish-heap, if he had made out the writing on them, or even copied it."

"Ah! *if*," said the doctor. "You remember the children's rhyme: 'If *ifs* and *ands* were pots and pans'?"

"Well, what would happen?" asked Sandy, seriously.

"Things would be completely different from what they are. It is not in the smallest degree likely that he *has* made out the inscriptions on the boys, and I believe he has come away from Tangier because he has somehow got the conviction that we have the key to the writing."

"Then why didn't he set us down to the translation yesterday?"

"If he is sure of us," said the doctor, "why should he be in a hurry? Besides, the reasons that work in the mind of an Oriental are not evident at once to people of our race."

"He is certainly a crafty old card," murmured Sandy. "I hate creeping craft! It's not in my way, and my genius is not at its best in dealing with it."

"Depend upon it," said the doctor, repeating, in varying words, what he had said be-

fore, "the boys are here, under his eye. Even if he has copied the writing from them, he is too careful a man to throw away the originals."

"Well," growled Sandy, "all I can say is, if they're here, they're more closely 'wrop up in mistry' than any prize-packet I ever saw!"

But he was not the dull person he made himself out to be, as the doctor well knew, although his cleverness, as he himself would say, was of an extempore sort; by which he meant that his brilliant strokes of thinking, or of guessing, or of acting, were all done on the spur of the moment of necessity, and not after a long process of application. About eleven in the morning, the sun by that time having a broiling effect upon man and beast, in spite of the breeze from the West, they camped for breakfast in the shade of a clump of cork-oaks. The doctor's party, though hospitably entertained with kuskusoo and green tea from the Basha's supply, sat apart from the Basha's company, mainly because the Basha was accompanied by some women of his household, and it is not lawful for a stranger—and espe-

cially a Christian—to look upon the wife of a true believer.

But the women, having sat down to eat and drink, rose up to play when the eating and drinking were at an end. The doctor and Sandy, lazily resting with their backs to a tree, and smoking in careful thought, turned to observe the movements of the women. There were six or ten of them fluttering and hopping about like great white fowls, and because they knew that strangers might be looking on, their faces were screened with veils, all but the eyes. They laughed and fluttered, and hopped and tumbled, and screamed with delight at one of their number who fell heels over head, trammelled in her white sheet. Then they played at ball, tossing it solemnly from one to another, and keeping up an accompanying rhythmic trill of “lu-lu-lu-lu!” Suddenly one of them threw the ball soaring high into the air, as a schoolboy might after a catch in the cricket-field.

“By gum!” exclaimed Sandy, slapping his leg, “that’s no woman and no girl! No girl in

this world ever threw a ball like that. Did you see? I'll bet my hat the woman is a boy. And why a big boy like that among the women? Oh ho, Nathaniel! have we hit it—have we hit the mystery, my boy? That's either Black or White! White, for preference. Oh ho, great, crafty, and subtle Basha! have I found out your little trick? But mum's the word! *Miching Mallecho!* It means mischief! Now, my boy, you guileless Nathaniel, how shall we make sure?"

CHAPTER XI

IN THE TENT OF THE WOMEN

THUS Sandy babbled eagerly to his comrade the doctor.

“Only by getting in among the women,” answered the doctor promptly.

They discussed in a low voice how that was to be done, and before they had finished another pipe of tobacco they had hit upon a plan, which they prepared to execute.

There were left from their breakfast or *déjeuner* some pieces of sweet-stuff, like what is commonly called ‘Turkish delight,’ of which the Moorish women, and more particularly the black slaves, are inordinately fond.

These the doctor at once secured and concealed.

Then, calling his brother from the company of Susannah, he sent him to bring the medicine-chest from among the baggage.

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When the medicine-chest was brought—Isaac Goldstein accompanying it, in wonder what it was wanted for—the doctor made a pretence that he merely wished to make a mild seidlitz drink or two at once; but when these were made, he privily abstracted some jalap. Isaac carried away the medicine-chest to re-pack it among the baggage; and then the doctor told his brother their situation, their suspicion, and their purpose, and said he wanted his aid in coming to a conclusion.

“What a lark!” exclaimed Jim.

“But you must be careful,” said his brother, making a slit with a penknife in each of the bits of soft sweet-stuff, and inserting some jalap in the hole thus made. “Don’t let any-one see you do it. When we set off again, ride for awhile in front with the baggage, as if to keep Isaac company. You will be among the last of the baggage lot, and just in front of the women slaves of the Basha’s household. Some of them—most of them, I think—will be on foot, as you know. Keep on the outside and drop these at intervals, as well out of the

track of feet as you can. But, I repeat, don't be seen doing it. I expect the female slaves to pick them up and eat them."

"All right," said his brother. "Trust me to do it properly. Give me the stuff."

When the great heat of the day had passed, the resting beasts were got upon their feet, and were reloaded with a great deal of noise—for every slave, while doing little himself, felt bound to urge every other to the noblest and most herculean exertion—and the cavalcade resumed its hot, dusty, and weary way to the South. Jim Greathed took his suggested place with Isaac, and then, after some miles in his company, he fell back to the place he had held in the morning.

"I've done it!" he said to his brother.

"Were they picked up?" asked the doctor.

"Some of them were, I know," answered Jim.

That night after supper—when the stars hung out of the deep purple-blue of the sky like glowing electric globes—there rose into the warm night-air cries as of bereavement

and deadly grief—howls as of many Rachels bereft of their children, and refusing comfort. They came plainly from the women's tent, and for them the doctor had been waiting.

“Keep yourself ready and in hand!” he murmured to his brother.

Presently there came flying a messenger from the Basha, a big black of the Basha's household, and prostrated himself before the doctor, embracing his feet and kissing the Moorish slippers with which he was shod.

“Allah! Allah! The pains of a hundred births have got hold upon the women! Sidi Tabeeb! Sidi Tabeeb! Deliverer of the Poor! Father of Cures! Come quick—come quick! His terrible and stupendous Excellency the Basha summons you! Ohè! ohè! Was there ever such a night of Gehennam in this land before?”

“I will come,” said the doctor, loftily.

“Ah! the Sidi Tabeeb speaks,” cried the black, “and lo! the thing is even as done! Peace will reign in my lord's presence. The women cry out as if in the pains of Gehennam!

But lo! the very eye of the Sidi Tabeeb will rebuke the Djins of colic! May the man who would say the Tabeeb is not a great lord, die solitary in a waste place; and may his great-great-grandfather roast in Gehennam!"

"Peace, friend," said the doctor, calmly. "I come." Then turning to his brother, he said, "Now, Jim, the medicine-chest! Come along, and be careful."

Jim Greathed had been chosen by his brother as associate in this business, not merely because he also was a doctor, but more because he was the one person of the company (besides Isaac Goldstein) who knew Black and White by sight.

"Keep your eyes open, Jim," said the doctor, as they followed the Basha's messenger, "and your attention all alive for the boys—because the Basha is certain to try to hide them from us."

They were first led to the sumptuous tent of the Basha himself. He sat amid a pile of green silk cushions, under a swinging oil-lamp cased in colored glass, and he was sur-

rounded by some of his suite "as if they were holding a committee-meeting," said Jim afterwards.

The Basha was very polite, but also very careful in his scrutiny of them and of what they carried. He begged to see the medicine-chest opened, and he made inquiry regarding the use of this medicine and that.

"Truly," exclaimed the crafty old man, smiling and taking snuff from his ever-present snuff-box, "you people of Europe have become great as our people were once upon a time! You are ever searching for the strange and marvellous, and your industry has been well rewarded! Our people sleep. They fold their hands and dream and say: 'Let be! To-morrow will be better than to-day!' But, as the Sidi Tabeeb said but yesterday, 'To-morrow is a dream which is never fulfilled.'" That was his only allusion to the talk he had held with Sandy and the doctor, and he pointed it with a shrewd look and an extra pinch of snuff. "Yea," he continued, "your people of Europe have penetrated the

mysteries of every science; you go forward and inquire and examine without fear, and by your courageous and unwearied pursuit of human learning you have found a remedy for every ill to which mortal men are subject"—and he pointed to the medicine-chest—"except one," he added with emphasis, "and that is Death—Death, which comes alike to all, believers and unbelievers." And he took another pinch.

Then he rose, saying, "I myself will go with you to the women's quarters." And he led the way, accompanied by two black slaves. "And where," he asked, "is the big red man with the beard of fire and the voice of brass? Ah! it is true, his presence is not needed; he is not a *Tabeeb*, and your young brother is. But, *kah! kah!*" he laughed; "truly the red one is a man!"

One of the two black slaves accompanying the Basha strode ahead when they approached the tent from which came the grievous cries and moans of the women. With a grand flourish of his arms he went up to the black

soldier on guard outside the entrance to the tent.

“He comes!” he cried. “He is here! Lo!” and he pointed. “The Sidi Tabeeb with our Lord!”

The flap of the tent was pushed aside, and the Basha entered first, and was followed by the doctor and Jim. A similar lamp to that in the Basha's tent swung from the roof, and illuminated dimly and weirdly the dozen women or more that filled the place. Some reclined on mat-beds, propped on their elbows, and others moved about, but the centre of all was a group of four negresses—slaves, doubtless—who sat on the ground with their knees tightly clasped to their bosoms, rocking themselves to and fro and moaning and crying, and occasionally squealing at a sharper pang than common. At sight of their lord and master, the Basha, they subdued their doleful sounds somewhat; but those who were unafflicted fluttered up to him, and poured out shrill chatter, like parrots, magpies, and monkeys.

“Peace, children!” said the Basha. “Be-

hold the Tabeefs! an elder and a younger, with all the cures of the universe in their hands, and all the learning of the Roumi in their breasts!"

An old lady, with bright hawk-eye, toothless mouth, and nut-cracker nose and chin, stepped forward. Her form and features were notable, but what made her more notable still was that about her skinny neck was plainly to be seen tattooed in bright blue the semblance of a chain, with a cross of Christ attached.

"Are they Roumi, my lord?" she asked, looking keenly at them.

"Nay, mother," said the Basha. "See you not they are Arby?" *

"You are welcome, Sidis," said the old woman, who seemed to be *duenna*, guardian, or mistress of the whole company.

"*Salamoo Aleckoum!*" murmured the doctor, opening his medicine-chest, while all crowded round him save those on the floor, who kept their places with large, terrified eyes fixed on him.

* Arby=Arab.



THE LALLA SAMANA.

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The doctor used slow and deliberate movements, for he knew he must impress these simple and superstitious people, as a conjurer tries to impress an English audience. If his actions were small and commonplace they would not believe in him, and faith is a large ingredient in efficacious medicine even among civilised people.

Jim Greathed was not much interested in these slow and showy preparations. He had no curiosity, for he knew what his brother was going to do. He, therefore, used the time to take a survey of the place and the people. The women and girls (indeed, all of them appeared to be young enough to be called *girls* from the English point of reckoning) surprised him by their want of good looks. Most of them showed evidence in hair or feature of some negro blood, and they had fine black eyes, softened by long silken lashes; but on the whole he thought how much more beautiful and charming Susannah was than any of these confined creatures of the harem. He let his eyes then rove into the darker parts of the

large tent in search of Black and White, but before he could make any discovery his brother demanded his aid.

The doctor knew what was the matter with the women who were ill, and therefore he was not anxious about his diagnosis; he felt their pulses and looked at their tongues long and solemnly, and then he called for water. He poured about a tablespoonful into a small glass, and, bidding Jim take the chlorodyne from the medicine-chest, he took it and counted out twenty drops, saying aloud in English, "one, two, three, four," and so on up to twenty. The women listened with hushed voices and strained eyes, watching the viscous drops fall and melt in the body of the water. It was all to them the working of a charm.

"In the name of Allah, drink!" said the doctor, stirring the drops with a stalk of grass (the use of that also seemed magic) and handing the dose to the first of the sufferers.

She drank the mixture off with a sublime and smiling rapture of faith. And then the

same process and the same words were rehearsed with the second, the third, and the fourth. The doctor stood and watched them, and the whole company waited for the extraordinary and magical result to become manifest.

“Most merciful Allah!” exclaimed the old woman who wore the tattooed necklace and cross, “keep us from evil spirits, and from men that work by charms!”

And since these women were totally unused to medicine, except of the roughest sort, the chlorodyne *did* have the effect of a charm. After a second or two of contemplation of the sensations pervading them, they gathered themselves together with a sigh of comfort, and lay down upon their mats, and in less than five minutes they were peacefully asleep.

“It is one of the wonders of wisdom and science!” exclaimed the Basha, who had been out of the tent and returned.

“It is as God wills!” said the doctor, piously. “I must wait some little while longer”—

and he sat down on the ground—"to keep watch on the effect."

The Basha looked with suspicion from the doctor to Jim, and back again to the doctor. But, in spite of his craft and his cleverness, and his acquaintance with Europe, he was half a barbarian, and had a respect, almost amounting to fear, for medical skill.

"You are welcome," said he, counting with little attention his praying rosary of green ivory beads. "It is not every man—not even every Moslem, my own brother or son—that I would leave among the women. But God be with you!"

Again he disappeared with one of his negro attendants—that one who had first announced the illness of the women—while the other remained as if on guard.

"Have you seen them yet?" asked the doctor, speaking in English to Jim, and referring to Black and White.

"No," answered Jim; "but there is a dark corner or two, and I am going to try a prow round."

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“Be very careful,” said his brother. “If the Basha finds you prying, it will be more than your head is worth.”

“Will it be a case of ‘Off with his ’ead, and on with a turnip’?” asked the careless Jim.

Every brown and black waking face gathered about the doctor, charged with curiosity. Eager to peep into his box of mysteries, and primed with questions about their little ailments—from a scratched toe to an itching eye-brow—the women chirped and chattered at him like a flight of starlings, while those dosed with chlorodyne dozed peacefully on.

The doctor thus held the attention of the majority, and Jim was casting his eyes around when a hand was laid on his arm. On looking aside with some dread that his intention was suspected, he saw the old woman who wore the tattooed chain and cross about her neck. She laid her finger on her lip, to warn him to be silent, and, still holding his arm, she led him to the back of the tent, while he kept his eyes roving for signs of the presence of Black and White. But he had seen noth-

ing, when the old woman opened a heavy curtain and drew Jim by the sleeve into a kind of alcove or retiring-room (if one may speak of any part of a tent as a room,) which was lighted by a swinging lamp of vari-colored glass. From a couch of cushions sprang up, like a startled animal, a young, delicate-looking girl. She put up her hands to her face and peeped at Jim between the fingers. She spoke in a whisper to the old woman, and the old woman answered her in similar wise.

During that to-and-fro of talk in Moghrebbin, Jim had leisure to observe the girl. Her age was probably no more than sweet fifteen, which is the prime of womanhood in Morocco, for the precocious beauty and maturity of Moorish and Arab girls seem to fade by the time they turn into the twenties. Her complexion was very fair; her eyes (so far as Jim could see them) a dark hazel-brown, with a languid expression, intensified by the black border of kohl. Her mouth was red-lipped and round as a ring, in the correct fashion of Moorish beauty; for the poet sings, "O Du-

du! your mouth is like a ring of coral." Her black hair, braided with silver cords, waved profusely about her shoulders.

Her slight and graceful figure was clothed in a pale-green caftan, embroidered on the bosom and skirt with silver thread. The caftan reached, like the kilt of the Highland song, "a wee below the knee," and over it she wore an upper robe of golden gauze, gathered about her waist with a zone of red silk from the looms of Fez. The sleeves of the caftan were wide, and open near the wrist, showing with every turn a beautiful arm, white and round, encircled by a snaky bracelet of gold from Jenne or from Timbuctoo. Her legs were bare below the caftan, and clasped at the ankles with chased silver bangles. Her feet, too, were bare (for she had not had time to assume her slippers), and showed plainly, like her hands, that they were dyed a bright orange with henna.

Jim's attention was withdrawn from this unusual vision of beauty by the voice of the old woman addressing himself. He was taken

aback, and gave himself up for discovered and lost; for the old woman spoke in Moghrebbin, and he did not understand a word that she said. Moreover, it was plain that the words formed a question, and a very earnest and urgent one. He shook his head, and looked at the old woman, as if he might understand if it were repeated. She repeated her question, and added more words; and when he looked helpless and nonplussed, she looked wistful and surprised. Then she took him by the sleeve and drew him towards the lovely girl, who, in her eagerness, now forgot to attempt to hide her face. Again the old woman said something extremely urgent, and pointed to the girl, and again Jim helplessly shook his head. The old woman then looked at him in bewilderment, and threw up her hands, and clasped them as if in despair.

“I am very sorry,” said Jim, speaking English, because he felt compelled to say something; “but I don’t understand.”

A sudden electric change came over the old woman, while the girl looked on in amaze-

ment. She seemed to struggle internally with some recollection of a painful sort, and then with a violent effort she spoke.

“N’zareny!* English speak! Oh! Basha come, hear, kill! Me have English, but—hark! Ah, wallahy, N’zareny! Basha!”

Jim heard a loud voice without, in the large tent, and the clash of weapons, and his heart fell into his boots in sudden fear, for he recognised the voice of the Basha.

“Where is the other Tabeeb?” roared the voice in Moghrebbin. “Where is the young one?”

The curtain was violently flung open; a heavy hand laid hold of Jim by the collar (if any Moorish garment can be said to have a collar) and slued him round.

“*Ellee Haramy!* Hullo, young rascal!” cried the Basha himself, grinning at him.

Jim, feeling as if his neck were already being swooped at by the great sword of the executioner, stammered out, in English again. “I was only brought——” But he got no further.

* Nazarene = Christian.

He was interrupted by the arrival of his brother to his rescue, and by the laughter of the Basha.

“*Kah! Kah! Kah!*” laughed the Basha. “So, boy, you come among my women? You have the courage to seek to carry off this precious gazelle? Know you not that you deserve to die? *Kah! Kah!* A plentiful letting of blood cools the ardor of passion!”

“Forgive him, your excellency,” said the doctor, with a white, set face. “He is young. He meant no harm.”

“*Kah! Kah!*” laughed the Basha. “Come away.” And he pointed out into the larger tent.

“Courage, N'zarenny!” whispered the pretty young maiden, loud enough for both Jim and his brother to hear, though the doctor alone understood at the moment. “The Basha does not kill when he laughs like that.”

The outer tent was a loud babel of excitement as they went out. In spite of their fear, both Jim and the doctor made a discovery. Beyond the circle of the women, in a dim corner of the great tent, there sat up with ter-

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ror-stricken faces, as if rudely awakened from sleep, a fair white boy and a boy of shining ebony. Black and White they were without a doubt! And the head of Black was swept as clear of hair as a billiard-ball!

CHAPTER XII

JIM'S CONDEMNATION

"COME," said the Basha, with a sweeping motion of the hand forth of the great tent, "I have a word to say unto you."

He ordered one of the slaves to precede him with a lantern, and drawing the hood of his jelab over his turban, he stepped out into the darkness.

The doctor and Jim could not choose but follow him, for the two big negroes, armed with firelocks and sabres, were at their heels. The night was wonderfully beautiful, with luminous stars, not set in the sky like jewels, as they appear in England, but globes of brilliance, singly and in clusters, swimming in the deep blue. The doctor and his brother, however, were too anxious about what might be the Basha's purpose to be much occupied with the beauty of the night.

"What were you doing when he found you?" asked the doctor impatiently in English.

Jim told him of the old woman with the tattooed necklace and the young girl in the inner tent, and the doctor wondered.

"The old woman spoke English?" he inquired.

"Something like English," answered Jim. "Foreigners' English, and pretty bad at that."

"The point to note," said the doctor, "is that she must have known English people. She probably liked them."

"Sure to!" said Jim.

His tone sounded flippant, but it was characteristic of him that the more anxious he was the less serious he seemed.

"Don't be a fool," said his brother. "If she liked them, she will probably have a friendly feeling for us. She may prove useful; let us make a note of that, for there is no saying what friends we may need in this awkward fix. Hullo!" he suddenly exclaimed, in a sharp, low note of surprise, on entering

the Basha's tent after the Basha. "What's up now?"

In the midst of the tent, beneath the colored lamp, sat, or rather squatted, Sandy Peebles, with his head bent and his hand in his beard. He was poring over a sheet of writing on a small Moorish table of the height of a low stool, while the Basha's pet bird, a cockatoo brought from Paris, swung in its ring a step or two off, and swore at him in low French—"Sac-r-r-r' nom!" with half a hundred 'r's.' In a dim corner squatted the Basha's Taleb, apparently engrossed with the telling of his beads.

"Don't jib," said Sandy in English, without looking up from his occupation. "I'm set to make out the writing on your lost bit of parchment. Shall I make it out rightly or wrongly? What's your advice?"

"Silence!" cried the Basha, clearly astonished and angry at Sandy's effrontery. "How dare any man speak in my presence without my permission—the permission of the representative of our Lord the Sultan, the Heir of

the Prophet, and the Commander of the Faithful?"

The Basha's angry and high-sounding rebuke gave the doctor a second or two to consider what answer he should make to Sandy Peebles. To and fro went his thought like a swift shuttle: The reading of the parchment might be a trap; it might be presented to him also for translation, and if his rendering varied from Sandy's, the angry Basha might sweep them out of his path. At the same time a correct rendering of the parchment might give the Basha the key to the Desert Treasure, and give him, therefore, a reason to be completely rid of them. But both these results must be risked. As soon as the Basha had done speaking, the doctor promptly made answer to Sandy, who was looking at him with expectation.

"Translate right," he said in English. "But not to-night. Take time."

That instruction, however, was made of no effect by what immediately proceeded from the Basha. The Basha stood rigid, and glared in such astonishment from the doctor to Sandy

that he said nothing in further rebuke. But he turned to the doctor with a savage grin.

“Let the Tabeeb hear my words!” said he. “I have here”—and he drew from his bosom some parchment—“two pieces of writing which have engaged all the Talebs and Wise Fakirs of the mosques of Tangier. The writing is Arabic, but the words are strange. You, Tabeeb, are learned in Arabic and in all other things. Read and interpret me these two pieces of writing—you one and your brother the other—and I shall forgive him his intrusion into my inner harem. If you or he fails to read and interpret the writing, then his life is forfeit. One hour I give you to make the interpretation. If in that time either yours or your brother’s is naught, there stands the slave ready to work my will.”

As the Basha spoke he flung out his hand at a huge negro who had just entered the tent, and who stood like a bronze statue, more than half naked, and bearing the great, broad-bladed sword of an executioner.

Both Jim and the doctor glanced at each other.

"But, your excellency," exclaimed the doctor, "my brother has not yet learned the Arabic sufficiently to read and interpret anything."

"I have spoken. It is enough. I turn not away from my word," said the Basha. "If he fails to read and interpret, his life is in my hand!"

The doctor was deathly pale. The threat was more terrible to him than if his own life were the price of his brother's correct interpretation; and the huge, black executioner at the entrance of the tent filled his vision.

"You don't understand what he says!" he exclaimed to Jim. "You must find out the meaning of that writing, and express it in the Moghrebbin, or you lose your life for being found in the Basha's inner harem."

"All right," said Jim. "You can say I'll do it on my head then."

"Do be serious!" said his brother, severely. "Don't you see Death standing there?"

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"I am serious, Nat," said Jim. "Isn't Death always standing somewhere? I'll do it right enough, with Susannah's help."

The doctor was surprised and strengthened with his brother's fortitude.

"Susannah is a good idea!" said he, laying hold of it on the instant. He turned to the Basha and said, "The youth, my brother, begs your excellency to allow him the aid of his servant, who understands both Arabic and English."

"It is well," said the Basha, readily. "I grant the youth, your brother, his request—his servant shall be brought hither." He turned to the door of the tent to send a slave for Susannah.

"I fancy," whispered the doctor to his brother, "that after all he thinks more of getting these things translated than of taking your head off. . . . Now," he said, "what's the matter with Sandy?"

Sandy Peebles, taking advantage of the back of the Basha, and being afraid to speak again while at his task, was making strenuous and

hurried signals. He held up and flourished three fingers. When he saw that his pantomime seemed to convey no meaning, he counted off three on the one hand with the fingers of the other, and lastly he pointed at himself, the doctor, and Jim, and pretended to place two other bits of parchment to fit against his own.

"Of course," murmured the doctor, and nodded with energy to Sandy in token that he understood. "He means," he whispered excitedly to his brother, "that he thinks we have got into our hands the three puzzle pieces of the directions to the treasure. I daresay he's right. The Basha is clever enough to get the words copied off Black and White. You remember we saw that Black's head was shaved?"

"I remember," answered Jim.

No more was said, for the Basha had turned again and was considering them.

"You, Sidi Tabeeb," said the Basha, "shall interpret that"—handing him one of the scraps of writing—"and sit there. And you,

young rascal," he said to Jim with a grin, "interpret that, and sit there."

The places appointed were as remote from each other and from Sandy's table as the shape and size of the great tent would allow.

"When you have made your interpretation," continued the Basha, "the Taleb will write it down. Now Heaven be with you."

Without a word they went to their places. "Just as if it were a school examination," thought Jim.

Jim, as you may guess, could make little or nothing of his scrap till Susannah should come, and he meditated thus as he ruefully regarded the Arabic characters:

"Why can't they teach us something useful at school? I learnt a little Latin and a little Greek—spent years on them. Latin has been of some use, not much—but Greek! Why couldn't they have taught me a little Arabic? Arabic, I believe, will carry you all over these parts of Africa and Egypt, and through a great part of Egypt into India. If I even knew the letters I could tackle this, for the words are

English. But I don't know the letters well enough, and if it weren't for Susannah I should be a goner!"

But the doctor, with the key to the interpretation which he had in his mind, was master of his scrap in a few seconds. Rapidly he made out these words:

"Come Dads East is of leap the Jebel days way to ruined the in of place east hundred a five turn angles three face walk paces come flight steps door bottom door blue cross."

In that there were three points which caught the doctor's attention like thorns. The first was "*Dads*," which he had read of as a district, a stream, and a village in the wilderness beyond the Great Atlas, and in the neighbourhood of the mountains of the Jebel Saghru. The next was the occurrence of the word "*Jebel*," which suggested that he had before him the scrap which must precede that which the old Jew had given him; for he remembered that the word "*Saghru*" had occurred in the Jew's fragment; and it was in the barest fitness of things that "*Jebel*" should stand im-

mediately before "*Saghru*." But the third point held him tight and provoked thought. He recalled that the last word of the Jew's fragment (which Sandy was poring on) was "*necklace*," and the last words of this scrap before him was "*blue*" and "*cross*." Therefore "*blue necklace and cross*" or "*blue cross and necklace*" inevitably came together as the concluding words of the complete document. Having got so far, was he not bound to think and wonder—and wonder again at the singular coincidence of the tattooed "*blue necklace and cross*" about the neck of the old duenna of the women's tent?

Meanwhile Susannah arrived, conducted by the black slave, who announced her with a flourish:

"Lo, Excellency! The servant of the young Sidi Tabeeb!"

Susannah looked very small in her scanty male dress, and very scared with being thus summoned to the tent of the Basha. Without any demonstration of interest, the Basha, who was watchfully squatted among his accustomed

cushions, snuff-box in hand, pointed to the anxious and forlorn Jim, and to Jim Susannah was led by the negro slave. They sat together and talked in whispers, poring on the scrap of writing which had to be interpreted.

The doctor, who was but half occupied with his speculations concerning the blue necklace and cross, observed Jim and Susannah closely. He was anxious to gather whether Susannah's aid would be sufficient—first, to read the Arabo-English of the scrap; and, next, to turn the same into Moghrebbin. He watched and waited, and the minutes slipped away, and he noted that Sandy Peebles had turned and was also regarding the two young people with eyes of anxiety. Still he watched and waited, and believed he saw more and more that his brother and Susannah were unequal to their task (Susannah, he told himself, being a Jewess, might not be at all familiar with written Arabic), and that doubt and anxiety were seizing them.

And still the minutes slipped away in silence, and Death, in the shape of the black

executioner, stood like a statue with gleaming eyes at the door, while the doctor expected every moment that the Basha would declare the allotted time was up for the interpretations to be completed. At length there was no doubt about it, the eyes of the two young people turned to him with a wild appeal, and Jim held up his hands and shook his head, in token of his failure.

Then a desperate resolve came upon the doctor, and he gave way to it to gain time, though he did not perceive whither it would lead. He made the daring guess that the blue necklace and cross tattooed about the neck of the old duenna of the women's tent had some connection with the blue necklace and cross of the inscription, and he spoke:

"O Basha!" said he, "permit me to say a word and to make a request."

"Say on, Tabeeb," said the Basha, grimly turning towards him.

("Thank God!" growled Sandy Peebles in English. "I am beastly sick of this. I should have had to shy my turban in the old

man's face, and then dot him on the crust if this had gone on a minute longer!")

"It is impossible, O Basha!" said the doctor, "to make out the interpretation completely without the old Lalla of the women's tent who has a blue necklace and cross tattooed about her neck."

"And wherefore so, Tabeeb?" demanded the frowning Basha. "What has the old Lalla to do with the interpretation of that strange writing?"

"There is here, O Basha, allusion to the blue cross which she wears, and I divine that she bears the key to unlock the whole mystery of the writing."

"Ha, you divine so!" cried the Basha in great excitement. "It may be—it may very well be that thou art a shrewd diviner, O Tabeeb!" He clapped his hands. "Let the Lalla Samana be sent for!" he called to the slave who appeared in answer to his summons.

"By Jove!" growled Sandy, poring again upon his own scrap. "That gives some meaning to the word necklace."

CHAPTER XIII

THE LALLA SAMANA

THE Lalla Samana presently entered the tent, and bowed herself before her lord, the Basha.

“What does my lord desire of me?” she asked, in evident surprise at being summoned at such an hour and into such company, for her quick black eye noted in a glance or two all who were present.

“The Sidi Tabeeb,” said the Basha, waving his hand towards the doctor, “wishes to have a word of precious speech with you, my Lalla.”

The woman turned her gaze on the doctor, who took up the burden of the interview, while the Basha among his cushions, Sandy at his central stool, the Taleb in his corner, and Jim and Susannah in theirs, looked and listened with the extremest interest. The Lalla continued standing, and the doctor, on the English instinct of politeness, stood also.

"Will the Lalla," asked he, "have the sweetness and goodness to tell me if she knows why the blue necklace and cross are about her neck?"

She gazed at the doctor an instant as if fascinated, changed color from brown to grey, and put up her hands to cover her throat, as if she guessed he made some astonishing discovery.

"Why does the Sidi Tabeeb," she asked in a low, appealing voice, "ask me that question?"

"The question is necessary," insisted the doctor; "will the Lalla be so sweet and good as answer it? No hurt or harm is intended by me to the Lalla."

"They have been around my neck," she answered, "since I was a little child."

"Does the Lalla remember if other children of her childhood's time also had these marks about their necks?"

"I can remember," she answered, after a moment's recollection, "no other child that had them."

"Have you ever wondered, O Lalla, why you and no other had them?"

"I have never wondered," she answered, somewhat sulkily.

"Nor ever guessed?"

"No, Sidi Tabeeb," she answered, still more sulkily and reluctantly. "They are probably a charm to ward off evil spirits."

The doctor felt he was at a pass with her, and he boldly ventured on guesses of his own.

"They are more than a charm, and the Lalla knows they are. Does the Lalla remember the village of Dads, beyond the great mountains?"

She lifted on him a keen, wondering gaze, and then let it drop to the ground again. "I have heard there is such a place, Sidi Tabeeb," she answered.

"And has the Lalla," asked the doctor, "not also heard of a great deserted city of white stone?"

She clasped her hands and gazed at him intently and in silence, murmuring, "The Great White City!"

"And," continued the doctor, "does the

Lalla know nothing of the blue necklace and cross that are to be seen there?"

"Ah!" she cried, with upraised hands. "The Sidi Tabeeb knows the Great White City, and the sign of the blue necklace and cross! Then he also knows my people, and the house of my father! My people are the tribe that keep the Great White City secure from approach by strangers, and my father was the sheikh of the tribe. But," she cried, with new surprise, "how comes it that you have been among them, and have seen the Great White City, and yet stand there alive?"

The doctor had heard more than he had expected. He was taken aback, and, glancing round upon the astonished company, and in particular at the Basha, whose eyes were glowing at him like coals of fire, he made answer:

"I have never been among your people, O Lalla! Nor have I set eyes on the Great White City, or on the blue necklace and cross. Nor have I ever seen Dads, or crossed the great mountains."

"Then," she cried, dropping her arms in helpless amazement, "Allah preserve us from those that traffic in visions and witchcraft! For, of a surety, O Sidi Tabeeb! you must be a wizard."

"Silence! No more!" cried the Basha, raising his hand. "As for thee, Lalla Samana, get you to your women." He clapped his hands. "Lead the Lalla forth," said he to the slave who answered his summons. "And now, dog of a Christian," he said, when she was gone, turning on the doctor with a white-toothed snarl, "thou hast entrapped me, and condemned thyself."

"If it please you to listen, O Basha——" began the doctor.

"I will listen no more to thy plausible voice," cried the Basha, transported with rage. "What hast thou to do with the Great White City," he cried, "and the wonders and treasures hid therein? Do you, insolent and restless sons of the English, imagine that all the earth is for you to run about on and to pry into, to take and to leave what you will?"

"The earth is the Lord Allah's and the fulness thereof!" answered the doctor, boldly. "And it is for the strongest and best to explore and to benefit by His bounty, and exalt His Goodness!"

"And do you say, dog of a Christian, that the sons of the English are the strongest and best?"

"There is no manner of doubt, O Basha," said the doctor, in most imperial mood, "that they are!"

"Bravo!" growled Sandy Peebles.

"Insolent dog!" cried the Basha. "We shall see! Take thou the pen of the Taleb, and sit down quickly, and write the interpretation of the words thou hast read on that paper."

The doctor received from the Taleb his reed-pen and ink-horn and sat down, and in a minute or two had written out the Arabic translation of the words on the paper. When that was done, the Taleb took the translation and handed it to the Basha. The Basha read, frowned, looked up, began again, and at last

intelligible together, then I am in the last strait a man can be in. But I have confidence in ye both that ye can render the interpretation of these. What need is there to hide what they are? They are the guide to the discovery of vast treasure in the Great White City. But that," said he, with a sunny burst of condescension, "ye well know already—else why are ye thus in this land?

"Now, in the fulness of my difficulty I am generous. The Sultan claims three-fourths of the treasure that may be found: that matters not. A sufficient amount may be called three-fourths, and yet a vast treasure be left. That will be mine, and of that which shall be mine, I will surrender the half to you, if ye will aid me with all your heart and soul, and hold not back.

"I am convinced your learning and your wisdom and craft are great; ye can interpret me these writings if ye will. Do so heartily, as if it were for your own profit and glory; stay with me till the end, and ye shall have

your reward, even to the half of all that shall be mine. What say ye?"

"What a fearful draught!" roared Sandy Peebles. Then, in a smaller voice, and in Moghrebbin, "Basha, someone is listening!"

And he indicated the opening of the tent.

With his poniard in his hand, the Basha, old though he was, plunged with alacrity at the place.

"What's to be done?" whispered Sandy, hurriedly, over to the doctor. "Better go the whole animal—hadn't we?"

"We can't help ourselves," answered the doctor. "I don't trust him, but we must appear to! At any rate, we'll get all the writing put together. And look here," he added, hastily, "wherever *East* occurs—it is in mine, and may be in the others—put *West*. Hush!"

"Oh! do not trust him, Sidis!" whispered Susannah, who had followed everything with the acutest attention.

The Basha returned, apparently having found no one. He glanced at Sandy and the

doctor with suspicion; but they seemed to be merely meditating on the situation.

"Well, Sidi Tabeeb," said he, "what is your decision?"

"Your excellency," said the doctor, "your frankness is that of an angel of Allah, and your generosity as the dews of the morning. My friend, I am certain, will agree with me that our gratitude passes the bounds of mere words."

"I do," growled Sandy, with a show of profound enthusiasm.

"We will do our utmost to interpret and to make meaning of the writings," continued the doctor, "though, believe me, Basha, the true key to the treasure is the Lalla Samana."

"I do not forget the Lalla Samana!" said the Basha, with a grim aspect.

"Then show us the writings, Basha. We are ready," answered the doctor. "To take all three together, O Basha! is the only way. I think, to produce the meaning."

The Basha seemed to hesitate a moment, and then, taking that which Sandy had before

him, and that which Jim had, he set all three before the doctor, along with a piece of parchment and the pen and ink of the Taleb, saying, "See, my Tabeeb, how I trust you!"

"Your excellency," said the doctor, "is pre-eminent in virtue and generosity!"

"Lay it on!" growled Sandy, in English.

It took the doctor but a little while to discover the order in which the three scraps came. Having discovered that, there was nothing to do but take the words as the old Jew had told him they had first been copied from the whole original—one from the first, another from the second, and a third from the third, and so on. These were the scraps:"

1. *"You to South Dads pass Lion's among of five that come white from pillar middle market due five of of ten right count more moon hundred you a ten a the the a and."*

2. *"Come Dads East is of Leap the Jebel days way to ruined the in of place East hundred a five turn angles three face walk paces come flight steps door bottom door blue cross."*

3. *"First South of the the in mountains Saghru*

march you the city broken the the look measure paces man foot at an hundred the four and to of with at over is necklace."

While silence prevailed throughout the tent, and while the Basha, appearing not to note the doctor, observed him very closely, the doctor with eager eye and beating heart ran down the order of the words in English, and dared to write them in shorthand on the inner side of his shirt-cuff (fortunately he *did* wear an English shirt, though all the clothing above was Moorish). And thus the meaning came out:"

" You come first to Dads. South-south-east of Dads is the pass of the Lion's Leap in among the mountains of Jebel Saghru. Five days' march that way you come to the white ruined city. From the broken pillar in the middle of the market-place look due East. Measure five hundred paces of a man of five foot ten. Turn at right angles and count three hundred more. Face the moon. Walk four hundred paces and you come to a flight of ten steps with a door at the bottom. Over the door is a blue necklace and cross."

All that the doctor wrote rapidly out in Arabic, changing *East* in the two places where it occurred into *West* (though he doubted when he had read the whole if that would truly make much difference in the issue), and then he handed the result to the waiting Basha.

"Now," said the Basha, in triumph over his own astuteness, "the Red One also shall write me his interpretation." He glanced shrewdly, but the doctor did not blench. He had expected that, and, as we know, had provided that his own and Sandy's version should agree. The Basha was carefully and intently reading the doctor's version while Sandy was producing his. When Sandy's was finished and handed to him, he compared it with the other.

"Ha!" said he, "it is well. Now it is a straightforward tale with a meaning. But," he continued, looking at both parchments with a puzzled air, "'*Face the moon*'? What moon? The new moon? The full moon? Or the waning moon? Do they not appear in different parts of the sky? And at what hour?"

"Nay, your excellency," said the doctor, "I

know no more than is set down. But I guess that it means such a moon as the three discoverers of the treasure looked upon. If the Basha can discover that he will know."

"And tell me, Sidi Tabeeb—if you can," added the Basha—"why none of the Talebs or Wise Fakirs of the mosques and schools were able to understand the writing."

"The reason is simple," answered the doctor; "though the characters are Arabic, the words are in a language they have never learnt."

"And what language is that, Sidi Tabeeb?"

"English."

"*Kah! Kah!*" laughed the Basha, "it is true. The maker and writer of the writing was the Englishman! It is always English, Englishman!—always! Go here, go there—English! Englishman! In the great desert, which is bare as the back of a beast, and on the heaving ocean, which makes the gorge rise and threatens to swallow you up—it is ever the same!—English! Englishman! But it grows late. Go and rest you now in your

tent," he said, with the soothing voice and benevolent smile of a father and a host. "You have made me your servant for ever! And as for you, young rascal"—turning to Jim Greathed—"you are forgiven. Go in peace."

He summoned a slave to guide them to their tent, and they departed, talking over with low voice the strange things that had come to pass, but not daring to breathe their doubts and fears of what might be the issue.

CHAPTER XIV

A VISION OF SUDDEN DEATH

OUR adventurers were in their tent, and Sussannah had repeated her acute note of warning: "Ah! do not trust him, Sidis. He is a wicked man—sly as a snake, but quick as a hawk!" when all sat up in astonishment, and with a sensation of being goose-skinned.

The flap of the tent was open because of the heat, and in the dark opening appeared a terror-smitten face. It came more into the light, and showed the blue necklace and cross of the Lalla Samana.

"*Hist!*" she whispered. "No sleep—no rest to-night, if you ever hope to see another sun! The Basha has now got what he needs of you! You are worn-out slippers! You are mouths to feed, persons to defend, and people to ask 'Why? Why?' You are a trouble to him, and you may, if spared, by the aid of

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Allah defeat his designs on the Great White City! Therefore he will make an end of you this night! I have heard it! So, Sidis, you must up and away."

"Come in! come in!" said Sandy Peebles, in the Moghrebbin. "Come in out of the draught! Besides, you may be seen!"

The Lalla entered, and stood, a terrified and ominous figure, on one side of the door.

"You have heard that he means to kill us?" said Sandy, who easily took the lead at such rude and critical moments.

"I have heard him instruct his slaves, Sidi," she answered, "to be ready at his order."

"What did he say?" asked Sandy.

"He said to his two executioners, 'When the Taleb calls the Adhan Prayer,* come to me with your swords ready sharpened for quick work!' And when they say, 'But, Basha, the men have little guns about their necks!' he answered, 'Their servant shall remove these while they sleep!' Judge then, Sidis, whether ye were not spoken of!"

* Between two and three in the morning.

"Then," said Susannah, to the astonishment of the company, "I must speak. Isaac Goldstein must die first!"

"Why Isaac? that poor worm?" said Sandy.

"Because," said Susannah, with fiery energy and flashing eyes, "see you not he is the servant? He is a traitor! He has betrayed you, Sidis, to the Basha!"

"What?" cried Sandy. "That miserable East-end Jew?"

"It is not wise, Sidi Sandy," said Susannah, laboring with her English, "to despise any Jew. If a Jew is not capable of good—capable is the word?" she said, with a look of inquiry;—"he is capable of evil! Good, sometimes; evil, always."

"But tell us what he has done," said Sandy.

She recounted in Moghrebbin, and in a low voice, lest Isaac might be eavesdropping, all the iniquities of which she knew, or suspected, Isaac to be guilty; his knowledge of the secret confided by her father to the doctor, his invention—his palpable invention—of "Bro'r Sol," his theft of the precious little bag from the

person of the doctor in the night attack in the streets of Tangier, and so forth.

The doctor and Sandy were set back with astonishment and vexation; for they had never suspected Isaac of treachery. They were even inclined to think that Susannah might be mistaken, if not in what she saw, at least in what she guessed, but Jim to great extent strengthened her statement by relating how troubled and guilty Isaac had looked under her accusations the morning before in the hotel in Tangier.

"Well," said Sandy, "Isaac's treachery must be reckoned in the bill. But now, my Lalla," he said, turning to the woman politely waiting in silence by the tent-opening, "why have you given yourself the pain to come to warn us of your lord's design?"

"If it please your lordship," said the Lalla, gently, "I would rather speak with the Sidi Tabeeb. I understand his speech better."

"Oh! all right!" exclaimed Sandy in English. "She has no great opinion of my Arabic evidently. Fire away, doctor."

"Why do you thus come to us, Lalla?" asked the doctor.

"Because," answered the Lalla, "I believe in my heart thou art he that is promised. It is said among my tribe (my tribe is Shloh *), it is said that a white man, a Roumi, would come and unlock the treasures which were hidden in the white Roumi city ages ago. My people fear the Roumi, and keep and ward the White City for the Roumi that will come. Thou art he, Sidi Tabeeb. I know thou art Roumi, and hast all the wisdom and wizardry of the Roumi; and thou hast told me all about the Great White City without having seen it. Arise, Sidi, and bestir thyself to escape from the Basha, and permit me, Sidi, a poor exiled woman, with my one dear, beautiful daughter whom the Basha would keep for his own—permit us, Sidi Tabeeb, to go with you to my own people! I will wash the feet of the Sidi when he is hot and way-worn, and cook crafty dishes for the Sidi! I

* Shloh is a name given to themselves by the Berbers, who are the ancient inhabitants of Morocco.

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will be the Sidi's slave, and my daughter shall be his for ever!"

"Ah!" put in Sandy, "let her come, on the understanding she brings Black and White along too."

"In the name of Allah, come with us on the journey," said the doctor; "but beside the beautiful Lalla, your daughter, you must also bring the black boy and the white that are hidden in the harem."

"Ah!" said she, "the Sidi knows also of them? Truly the Sidi knows everything! They shall come."

"The escape and the journey will be crammed with perils, my Lalla, even as a hedge is set with thorns," said the doctor.

"The wisdom and wizardry of the Roumi will overcome all perils!" said the simple, believing woman.

"And now we must act," put in Sandy. "Has the Lalla any advice? Ask her."

The doctor asked her, and she answered:

"I have thought, Sidi. It is my habit every night to carry to the Basha a sleep-drink; let

the Tabeeb from his wonderful medicine-box give me something to put in the drink that will make him sleep sound—very sound! And let the Sidis all slip away into the wood behind the camp at the hour of midnight, with such things as ye must take. There ye will find the necessary beasts for all—horses and mules.”

The doctor made a rapid calculation.

“Seven beasts, at least, will be necessary,” said he.

“Eight beasts will be provided, Sidi,” said she. “He who finds the beasts will need one. He will go as guide. He is the Basha’s master of horse, but he is one of my own people.”

“And where are we to be guided to?” asked Sandy.

“Yes, where?” said the doctor.

“Where it pleases the Sidis to turn on the way to the Great White City,” said the Lalla.

“The Basha might very quickly be after us,” said Sandy, “if we tried to go right ahead by land. My notion is,” he added, with resolute conviction, “that we should make for the sea

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and take ship for Saffi or Mogador. We can't very well turn back to Tangier, but I reckon that Laraiche is some twenty miles south-west of this spot. Does your friend, the master of the horse, know the way to El Araish?" he asked Lalla.

"Doubt it not, Sidi!" she answered.

"Laraiche be it, then," said the doctor, and turned to prepare an opiate for the Basha.

"What about Isaac?" asked Jim. "There doesn't seem to be either horse or mule for him, if you count them."

"He must be otherwise provided for," said the doctor. "If he is not to be trusted, it would be folly to take him. I daresay he'd rather stay and try his luck with the Basha."

"And with my clocks," added Sandy. "I'll put it to him," said he, rising to go forth. "By George, I will. I wonder where he is. And where," he asked, looking round, "is Susannah?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Jim, "if Susannah hasn't her eye on Isaac. She slipped out a little while ago."

"Come and let us see," said Sandy.

And he and Jim slipped out into the warm, starlit darkness together.

The doctor handed to the Lalla the opiate he had been preparing, and murmuring: "At midnight, Sidi," she slipped away also; and the doctor was left alone to select such things as they must take with them on this venturesome escape and the consequent perilous journey. Fortunately, Sandy had still abundance of money; for most of their baggage, their tent, and all their merchandise would have to be abandoned.

Meanwhile, Sandy and Jim, groping about in the star-light, stumbling over tent-ropes and sleeping Arabs that looked like heaps of dirty white clothes, were at some loss where to turn. The camp was not large, yet it troubled them where to look for Isaac or Sussannah.

"Suppose," whispered Jim, "Isaac saw the Lalla come, suspected something, and went and told the Basha."

"I think we should have heard of it by

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now, my boy," said Sandy, "if he had done that."

"Hist!" whispered a small white figure, turning up from goodness knew where, and taking Jim by the elbow. "Come away here." It was Susannah. She drew them swiftly behind a tree. They were on the edge of the encampment. "I knew your voice," said she to Sandy in Moghrebbin. "Hush! Isaac comes this way from the tent of the Basha. I saw him go. I followed and saw him enter. Now he returns. He is a traitor."

They lay down upon the ground to appear like sleeping Arabs. And in a moment Isaac came by, treading carefully and peering about. Near the tree he paused, and said to himself in a low voice, "'Pon my blessed, dear life, I could 'ave swore I saw somefing about 'ere!" But, after a pause, he went softly forward. Sandy and the other two rose and followed him. He went steadily on, and entered the tent of the company.

"Excuse me, doctor," he said, as he entered; "but there ain't no use tryin' to knock when

you git to a tent-door! 'Door,' says I; but there ain't no door—is there?"

He had just said these words when Sandy appeared behind him.

"Isaac," said he, "I heard the Basha calling you back."

"Back?" said Isaac, off his guard. "Wot for?"

"Oh!" said Sandy, "you *have* been with the Basha, then? Of course, you have! Here's a feather of the Basha's cockatoo on your sleeve!" And he made show of picking a suggestion of white fluff (which was not there) from Isaac's arm.

Isaac had turned white to the lips, and his large ears worked with astonishment.

"Mr. Peebles," said he, "I don't know what you mean? 'Pon my davy, I don't!"

"O yes, you do, Isaac," said Sandy, turning over the corks in the doctor's open medicine-chest, while the doctor looked on in silence. He found at length, not a cork, but a 'cube of wood. "I want you to do me a favor, Isaac," said he, carelessly; "try your teeth on that.

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Teeth pretty strong, eh? Take a good, fair bite."

Without suspicion of harm, Isaac opened his mouth wide and took a good bite with goodwill. Before he knew what had happened his head was in Sandy's great hairy hands, and Sandy's handkerchief was about his mouth and the bitten wood.

"If you manage to bite that through you have better teeth than I have," said Sandy, "and mine are better than most."

"Oh! let me tie it, Sidi Sandy," said Susannah, in Moghrebbin, springing into the tent. "He is a traitor of my own people, and I must have a hand in his punishment."

In a second or two Isaac was gagged, and bound hand and foot.

"I think we had better fix him on one of our sleeping-mats," said Sandy, "and then in the dark they wouldn't know but that he was one of us."

Sandy sniggered, for Isaac's apprehension of the danger he would thus run was violently shown.

"He is a coward, you can see," said the doctor, quietly, although in some disgust, "but don't torture his mind."

"Well," said Sandy, "he must just take his chance, tied to the tent-pole."

Isaac thus being disposed of, they set themselves to get all things ready for their flight with as much silence and dispatch as possible, while Isaac's eyes followed their every movement. Then, perforce, they were compelled to wait with what patience they could command until the hour of midnight.

At any moment the emissaries of the Basha might burst in upon them, but still they must wait. They had been so engrossed with the action to which the Lalla Samana had summoned them that the business of their interpretation of the writing for the Basha had gone back in their attention. While they waited it came to the fore again, and they talked of it in low tones.

"I can't remember the whole of it, worse luck!" growled Sandy. "If I could only have made a copy of it!"

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"I did make a copy!" said the doctor.

"What?" said Sandy. "Of the whole of it?"

"Of the whole of it, on my shirt-cuff, in shorthand."

"Bravo!" growled Sandy. "Hooray! If we really get hold of Black and White—or whether we get them or no—we are now as we should be!"

"Mister Sandy," murmured a strange, muffled voice, "I've bit it through." It was the voice of Isaac. "Let me off, won't yer? S'welp my never! I won't never round on you agin. O my blessed dear life! you ain't never goin' for to leave me 'ere? Send me back to 'Oundsitch if ye won't take me wiv you. Any bloomin' mistake rather nor leave me wiv this orful Basha. I didn't mean no harm! S'welp me, I didn't! I on'y thought you was a pair of bloomin' idiots, and old Blue Beard would 'ave the best of the game. Now I see yer ain't so dusty! You know your way about! Let me off, and take me wiv yer."

"I think he'll do," said the doctor. "He has had a scare."

"O my blessed dear life!" murmured Isaac. "Ain't I just?"

"All right!" growled Sandy. "Let's take your rattle-traps off. But not a sound, mind, till we are miles away from here—not a cry or a mew above a whisper, or I will shoot you! If you raise an alarm to bring the Basha after us, down you go the very first."

"Hush!" whispered the doctor, "what's that?"

Their voices had been low, but now they were completely silenced, and they listened breathlessly. They were not very far from Tangier, and had no fear of the horse-thieves that infest the plains further south, and therefore all the animals were without the encampment, hobbled or tethered in the shelter of the wood.

From among them there plainly came a restive movement, subdued but prolonged.

The doctor looked at his watch.

"We had better be moving," said he.

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Leaving the faint night-light burning, and crouching to the ground, they passed out of the tent one by one, the doctor first and Sandy last, with the repentant and forgiven Isaac Goldstein immediately before him.

Once beyond the glimmer of the light, they moved swiftly towards the blackness of the wood, close to which they were. On its margin they came upon a sentry seated upon the ground, with his long gun across his knees.

A slight pause told them there was no harm in him. He was sound asleep, and his back against a cork-oak.

They passed him by, and the darkness of the wood swallowed them up.

CHAPTER XV

THE DJIN OF THE PLAINS

“S—ST!” sounded a voice, like the hiss of a serpent, close at hand. It was the guide, the Basha’s master of the horse, who was in waiting for them. He led them swiftly forward, deeper into the wood, holding the doctor by the hand, the doctor holding Susannah, Susannah holding Jim, and so on to the end of the line.

The eight beasts, six horses and two mules (whose quality could not be seen in the dark), were fastened all in a row, with a morsel of fodder each to keep them quiet. In waiting by the beasts were the Lalla and her daughter, and two children eager and whispering, who were doubtless Black and White: Black and White at length recovered after so singular a pursuit made after them!

The guide held a whispered word or two of

talk with the doctor concerning the order of movement, which the doctor communicated to Sandy, and then their pieces of baggage were placed upon this beast and that, the Lalla and her daughter were set upon the two mules, because being women in women's garments they were not suited for trampling through the wood (Susannah was, of course, still supposed to be a boy), and the two children were mounted upon one horse. The guide led off with the bridle of one mule in one hand, and the lengthened halter of the following mule in the other; Jim followed with his hand on the horse that carried the children, the doctor came next leading two horses, and Susannah, Isaac, and Sandy followed, leading one each.

But, before they set forth in this order, there was enacted a little scene which almost ruined their project. Whilst these preparations were being made, both Sandy and Susannah, who kept their eyes on Isaac Goldstein, observed that he continued to peer around on this side and on that, as if to penetrate the thick dark-

ness, and they watched him with the closer suspicion.

When they were being placed in order, Isaac turned with a hurried whisper to Sandy.

"Mister Sandy," said he, "wot's got the camels?"

"They're not here," answered Sandy, curtly.

"Ain't we goin' to take 'em?" asked Isaac.

"Take them? No!" answered Sandy, in a fierce whisper. "How many miles an hour do you think your camels can do? If we took them we should be attending our own funerals in the morning."

"And ain't we goin' to take no goods?" said Isaac, growing steadily more impassioned and more loud. "No clocks? No nothink?"

"No," said Sandy, curtly and sternly, "nothing but what's here."

"O my blessed dear life!" cried Isaac, completely forgetting himself. "All them beautiful goods! All them lovely clocks!—six-and-nine the piece, if a tanner!—all on 'em left be'ind! O my precious dear life, that ever I should see the day!"

“Hold your tongue, you fool!” cried Sandy, catching him by the throat and pinching it to silence him; “or your precious dear life will end here. If I didn’t think you only a blundering idiot I would shoot you for this.”

But at that moment even Isaac perceived his mistake. A shot rang out—the shot of the sentry, probably, on the edge of the wood—a shot to warn the camp.

“Silence!” came in an authoritative whisper from the guide. “Forward! Seconds of time are now valuable as drops of blood!”

In the order prescribed they set forward through the wood. The wood was to the south of the camp, beyond the wood was a stream, and towards the stream they urged their way. They inclined an ear over their shoulders to catch any sound of alarm that might come from the camp. But to their growing relief, and somewhat to their surprise, no other sound followed the shot.

It appeared that the alarm had not been taken.

But suddenly an uproar of voices from the

camp broke on their straining ears and set them forward with new effort, dragging the beasts after them, though, indeed, the beasts seemed eager enough themselves, probably because they smelt the stream before them. What was the cause of the sudden uproar? Had they discovered the empty tent of the doctor and his company? Or had they failed to wake the Basha? and did they think him dead?

Still the noise continued, beasts as well as men joining lustily to produce it.

Every moment the fugitives expected to hear some more active and venturesome than the rest come hurrying in pursuit.

At length the party of fugitives emerged from the wood, and saw the stream shining some hundred yards off. But whilst they had been in the wood a change seemed to have come over the world. The sky was black, and the heat which had been steadily growing all the night through was now become so oppressive that man and beast streamed with perspiration, and their lungs labored with the hot and stifling air. The wind, which in

a few minutes had changed from west to south-east, began sighing and sougning ominously in the trees—moaning like a giant in pain.

“The Djin of the Plains is abroad!” cried the guide, frantically, from the front. “Haste! haste to the stream! In a few minutes it will be roaring in waves, and we may not pass over!”

He started off, dragging the mules at a gallop, and yelling at them for obstinate sons of a she-ass, and all the rest charged after him to reach the stream.

“Mount!” cried their guide, excitedly, drawing up on the brink of the stream. “Mount, and bare your feet and legs to keep your garments dry!”

There was some moments' delay over the mounting. Isaac, who was no horseman, had to be hoisted by Sandy on the back of his beast, round the neck of which he clung with exclamations about his “blessed dear life.”

Then there was a difficulty about the two boys. Jim could take one with him on his horse, but not two.

"Can either of you boys ride?" asked the doctor.

"I can, sir," said White.

"Me too, sah!" said Black.

And that was the first time they had heard the voices of the boys, about whom so much ado had been made.

"All right," said the doctor, choosing White, as more likely to be truly the rider. "Jump up here."

All being mounted, they urged the beasts forward into the stream, which luckily was neither very broad nor very swift, and at its deepest no deeper, probably, than the height of a man.

They had barely crossed when the storm swept down. The wind increased to a hurricane.

Then far behind there arose a strange sound like the continuous roll of a big drum—a vast drum; and looking away beyond the wood and beyond the camp, they saw in the east and south a high black wall with broken, lumpy top—blacker far than the blackness of the sky.

The Djin of the Plains 211

They looked, and as they looked it seemed to come nearer and nearer, and the sound of the drum increased.

“The Djin!” cried their guide, pointing. “He comes. Ride for your lives! Ride!”

The Djin, in plain words, was the Dust-storm, a kind of cyclone or tornado, which frequently arises in the Moorish plains, when the wind chances to set from the Great Desert.

The wall of blackness which they had seen was a wall of fine sand and dust, and as it came booming on with the sound of a savage and gigantic drum, the roaring of the wind in the trees grew to be like that of a great torrent. In a minute or two (while the fugitives put their beasts to their speed) the Dust Fiend had swept down upon the camp and the wood, and the sound of its mighty drum mingling with the rush of the hurricane among the trees produced a tremendous and awful roar.

The fugitives thought with trembling of the overwhelming dismay in the camp they had left—of the overturned tents, the maddened and screaming beasts, and of the eyes, nos-

trils, and mouths of men and women filled with dust and sand; and in the effort to escape they urged the snorting and terrified horses forward.

On came the cloud of dust with a strange whirring sound, till they could conceive of it as a monstrous bird. On it came and lashed the stream into furious waves—on it came, and—they could scarcely believe it—*passed* on the other side of the stream—*passed* with a mighty sound like the sweep of the wings of a flock of Sindbad's great birds—a noise like the rending and tearing of the sails of a fleet. They halted, and saw it pass, and their hearts were filled with an amazed and grateful sense of relief.

“Allah be praised!” said their guide. “He hath spared his poor fugitives, and overwhelmed the great Basha!” But the Lalla said some word or two in a low voice, and straightway he came to the doctor, seized his hand, and kissed it. “Forgive me, Sidi, that I forgot. You are a great Roumi wizard, and your power has turned aside the Djin! The

Djin roared but he fled in terror from the presence of the Roumi wizard!"

"Nay, friend," said the doctor; "it is the will of Allah that the Dust Fiend should not cross the water!"

What was the use of explaining to him that the storm was a cyclone and whirled in a circumscribed area?

"Well," cried Sandy, "lucky for us, at least, that the fiend didn't cross! 'Pon my word, I am inclined to believe that we are the chosen people—as your forefathers, Isaac, believed when they crossed the Red Sea!"

"Ah! Mister Sandy," said Isaac, with a strange touch of reverence in his voice, "that was wonderful! So is this! Ain't it?"

"Almost as wonderful, Isaac," said Sandy, "as you sticking on your horse!"

"Oh! it ain't a joke, Mister Peebles," moaned Isaac. "But—O my blessed dear life!—them beautiful clocks, all left be'ind!"

CHAPTER XVI

ESCAPE TO LARAICHE

AFTER some re-arrangement of the riding, in order that their guide might have a mount, they paced forward slowly and in silence over the plain, having little fear now of pursuit, and hearing no evidence of any such thing. The dust-storm raged for little more than half-an-hour altogether. When it was over, the wind again changed into west, and it became very cold—cold, that is, for that land, and that midsummer time. In England the hay-harvest was being gathered, and the corn was just ripening; but there in Morocco the harvest (chiefly of barley) was long over, and the pasture, which three months before had been a gay and rich carpet of dense green grass and sweet-scented flowers, was burnt brown and bare.

The relief from the extraordinary strain of

excitement made the fugitives limp and the cold made them wretched and drowsy. Therefore, scarcely a word was spoken, until suddenly a tinge of violet beginning far up the sky before them spread swiftly downward, and all the upper air was pervaded with light. The whole company stopped, and turned to the East, and saw the rosy dawn clothing the bare tops of the distant hills with pink.

“The sun!” murmured the Englishmen.
“Thank Heaven!”

The guide, however, said no word, but dismounted, and aided the two Lallas to dismount also. With eyes closed, head bent, hands crossed on the breast, they stood an instant, as if to fix their minds on the Holy Mecca of their Prophet in the distant East.

Then they bowed themselves several times, murmuring: “O Giver of Good to All! O Creator!” and other of the ninety-nine epithets of Almighty God, enumerated in the Fabha of the Koran. After that they prostrated themselves, according to the manner of the prophet of Israel, who wrote: “With our

hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, we say, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" It may be that these three "true believers" had but little thought of what they did, but all the same that simple reverence of the Unseen and the Almighty was touching, impressive, and becoming, and the rest of the company, having dismounted, bowed themselves also in silent prayer.

When the sun rose they became warmer, and then they all looked curiously and kindly on each other, as comrades who were to be cast together for better or worse during many a weary day.

Their guide, the late master of horse to the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa, was the most remarkable of the additions to the company. His name was Kadoor.

He was very tall and slim, with an unusually long neck and a bright eye, which turning ever restlessly made him look something like a bird. Moreover, he had one of the sweetest, loveliest voices that ever came from a male throat, and he seemed to know it and take delight in it

himself, for all the rest of the way at intervals he would carol forth snatches of song—songs of love and songs of war, and sad, sad songs of the vanished but unforgotten glories of the Moors in the splendid Spain of long ago. And yet he was no Moor himself (nor did he look a Moor,) but one of the original conquered race.

Though he conducted himself so gaily he was plainly not without anxiety, for on passing over any rising ground he would stand in his stirrups (he wore soft, heelless yellow boots armed with enormous spike spurs) and gaze backward over the way they had come, and he was ever urging the mules to push forward and to “forget—if they could—that they were the accursed sons of she-asses.”

He rode in front of the party, with Black perched behind him, and the mules bearing the two Lallas pacing on either side of him. After him rode Jim Greathed, with White on his crupper and Susannah on his right hand; and next came the doctor and Sandy, with Isaac riding (or rather clinging desperately to

his saddle) between them. The two Lallas, being Berber (more or less), and therefore not so strict in their Mohammedanism as the Moors, rode unveiled, and everyone was smitten with the extreme beauty and sweetness of the younger. Susannah was so taken with her that she incontinently confessed she was no boy, but merely a girl—an unfortunate Jewish orphan, under the protection of the Sidi Tabeeb; and then the two girls rode side by side and fell into such confidential talk as girls love.

Jim, on his part, began to inquire concerning his companion.

“I say, White,” said he, “what’s your name?”

“Why do you call me White?” said the boy. “My name isn’t White, it’s Henry Dixon.”

“Well,” said Jim, “that’s just what I wanted to know. We only called you White and your chum Black because we didn’t know what else to call you. Do you remember where I first saw you?”

“No.”

"With the old Jew, Bensusan, and Isaac there, on Jubilee Day, in that house in the Borough."

"Oh! yes," said the boy. "Wasn't that a jolly show?" But he could remember nothing, or, at least, would speak of nothing that happened after that, until he found himself in the possession of the Basha.

"Was he good to you?" asked Jim.

"Oh! yes, he was good enough; I liked him. He made Musa get his head shaved, though, and Musa didn't half like that. You know why Musa got his head shaved? It's rather funny; but I mustn't laugh at it, 'cause I'm something the same myself. Me and him has a secret written on us, him on his nut and me on my arm. I'll show you presently, though don't you tell anybody. I say, what's your name?"

"Jim Greathed."

"And your brother's the doctor, isn't he? Him behind us. I haven't got any brother, nor any father, nor any mother, nor anything!"

“But you went to school, didn’t you?” said Jim.

“Oh! yes, I went to school, and I’ve got this writing on my arm,” said he, proudly.

“Where did you go to school?”

“Sevenoaks,” answered the boy. He laughed: “There was a porter at the station always called out ‘Snooks!’ and we called him ‘Snooks,’ that’s why.”

“A good school?” asked Jim, wondering a little at Henry’s talk.

“Yes, a tidy school,” said Henry, loftily. “Too much suet-duff and pork. We kept pigs, you know. But not half bad.”

But of a sudden there came an alarm, and interrupted their talk.

“Ha! behold!” cried Kadoor, from the front, waving an arm towards the hills on their right rear. All eyes were turned that way, and beheld a troop of horsemen riding furiously down on them, while their jelabs were streaming behind them like banners. “Ride! ride!” yelled Kadoor. “The men of the Basha have overtaken us!”

"O my blessed dear life!" cried Isaac, hugging the high pommel of his saddle. "He will cut us up into little pieces! He will make sausage-meat of us!"

"Ride, ride!" called Kadoor. "Ride for the wood! We may save us there!"

"Hold tight, little 'un," said Jim Greathed to the boy on his crupper.

"I'm all right," said the boy. "I'll stick on, never fear!"

Before them, but somewhat aside from their route, was a fairly extensive wood, and to that, at Kadoor's suggestion, they rode their hardest. When they attained the shelter of the wood they drew rein. They were surprised not to hear the thud of hoofs behind them. They turned and looked back the way they had come, let their eyes range over all the slopes near and far, but no sign of even a single horseman was to be seen. The threatening cavalcade had vanished into the air as if they had never been.

"Merciful Allah!" cried Kadoor, glancing at the doctor, "great is the wizardry of the

Tabeeb! A minute since a hundred cavaliers were riding hard to capture and slay us. They were, and lo! they are not! What has the Tabeeb done with them?"

"Put them in your pocket or your medicine-box," murmured Sandy to his comrade. "Keep it up."

"Stuff and nonsense," growled the doctor. "It's very plain what it is—it's a mirage," said he. Then to the simple Berber he said, "It is but a vision, O Kadoor."

"Then," said Kadoor, "the Sidi Tabeeb is a great maker of visions! Did the Sidi wish to make greater haste? Lo, Laraiche is before us!" And he began carolling a little song about a great Sultan that loved a little Lalla.

When they had passed the wood they saw before them a river, winding sluggishly, like a letter S, and on the farther side, on the slope of a hill against the sea, a small white town. The battlemented, but broken, walls surrounding the town and the wood of great trees behind gave it an appearance of peace and security. In the little harbor below the

town lay a number of small ships, and out beyond the bar were anchored some larger vessels, notable among which was a steamer.

"El Araish!" said Kadoor, pointing with imperial gesture.

"And a steamer flying the British flag, my boy," exclaimed Sandy—"the good old red duster. By Jove! but we're in luck this time."

They crossed the river in a clumsy and crazy ferry-boat, which three Moors poled across with the vigor of giants and the yells of madmen, and a few minutes thereafter they passed through the gate of the town. They entered under no kind of suspicion, for they appeared like natives. In a *fondak* (or inn) they found shelter from the burning sun (it was then nine in the morning) and some food and drink; and there also Kadoor, by the doctor's instructions, sold the mules and horses, for they had no intention of carrying them to sea also. The doctor and Sandy had debated their future progress in the early morning, and they had agreed that, now they were un-

trammelled and had everything ready in the way of information for their journey to the Great White City, they should go to Saffi or Mogador by sea, and thence march by way of Morocco (or Marakesh) over the Atlas Mountains, and so into the unknown.

When he was refreshed at the *fondak*, the doctor went forth alone to inquire concerning the British steamer. He had been in Laraiiche before, and knew where to go for information—to the house, namely, of a certain Jewish merchant. Arrived there, he made his inquiry.

“The Reis (captain) is in my inner room, Sidi,” said the Jew. “You may speak with him.”

Introduced into the inner room the doctor instantly recognized the captain as one he had sailed with before.

“How d’ye do, Captain Robinson?” said he, while both the captain and the Jew stared.

“Why, good luck!” exclaimed the captain, after a pause of sharp scrutiny. “Surely it’s Doctor Greathed!”

"It is the very same," answered the doctor.

"Well," said the bluff skipper, slapping his hand into the doctor's, "you do carry the Moor off first chop! I shouldn't have suspected you."

"That's your ship out there, I suppose?" said the doctor.

"It is the same old tub," answered the captain. "The same old tramp."

"I see her bows are turned to the South?"

"Quite right. Do you mean you're going South, too?"

"To Saffi or Mogador," said the doctor.

"Casalbanca and then Saffi," said the captain, "are my next ports of call. They're getting steam up now, and I hope to up anchor in another hour."

"That suits me exactly," said the doctor. "There are ten of us. Three are women and two boys."

"Babies, d'ye mean?" cried the captain.

"No," answered the doctor, solemnly. "Boys of twelve or so, and one of them a nigger."

"Be jabbers!" cried the captain. "What a menagerie! But you surely haven't set up a harem, doctor?"

"Oh! no," answered the doctor. "Merely a party travelling for business purposes. You may hear more later. I suppose you can carry us? You must!"

"Carry you? Yes. And come on board at once! But it's a rum go, seems to me!"

Until the last moment of their having a foot on shore anxiety worried them lest the Basha should appear in pursuit, lest even his emissaries might ride down the hill and arrest them when half in and half out of the ship's boat. But at length they were on board the British ship and steaming away to the South, and then they knew they were free from pursuit by the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa, and that in all probability they would never see him again, unless, by ill-luck, they encountered him beyond the Atlas Mountains on the same quest with themselves. But, in any case, they judged they would be far ahead of him, for they might be in the city of Morocco

before he would be through Fez, and certainly before he could send any word concerning them, if he should suspect them of going that way.

Susannah had been to sea before, and was a tolerable sailor, but the two Lallas had never been on salt water (though they had belonged to the household of the Basha, they had been left behind in Tangier while he went to Europe), and they were proportionately distressed and terrified with the motion of the ship and the horrible and deadly sensations that seized them.

They were so ill that they were invisible to all but Susannah, until they reached Saffi.

Susannah was very kind to both, and they became very intimate together, in spite of the hereditary hatred and contempt of all natives of Morocco for the Jews that dwell among them—an intimacy and trust which later bore fruit.

Kadoor, the ever gay, had been to sea before, and was proud of the fact, though the sea had no mercy for him on that account.

He tramped the deck, and looked over the ship's side at the streaming green water, humming the while his little ditties—and then greenness and dread would come upon him, and with a sad, sad smile of appeal he would moan, "O Sidi Tabeeb!" He liked the brandy the doctor gave him, notwithstanding its being prohibited by the Koran, and when the fit was over, he did not seem to care how soon another came upon him.

On the afternoon of the next day they were off Saffi, and fortunately the sea was calm enough to permit of their landing in two of the strangely built and barbarously decorated surf-boats.

"Good luck to you, doctor!" called the skipper, who had been told by the doctor something of the purpose and dangers of the journey. "I'll look out for you two months hence."

"Better say three," called back the doctor.

Amid the shouting and yelling of the boatmen they were swept in by the curling waves, and then, the steersman watching in silence

for his opportunity, they were swiftly borne with a smooth, gliding motion between rugged rocks, and first one boat and then another lay high and dry upon the beach. As soon as they were landed, Kadoor and the two Lallas, as by one impulse, fell on their knees and kissed the ground—so glad were they to be off the quivering, laboring ship which they dared not trust, and to touch their own red earth again!

CHAPTER XVII

THE HADJ

IN that wonderfully dirty and crumbling town, which, filling a semi-circular slope facing the sea and crowned with the large flat palace where "The Red Sultan" died, looks so imposing and so white in the sunlight—in Saffi the company was compelled to linger more than two whole days to get provided with necessaries for their journey.

They required chiefly cooking-utensils and a couple of tents—one for the women and the other for the men—and as many beasts as before; but, on closer inquiry and consultation between Kadoor, the doctor, and Sandy, it was resolved that as few beasts as possible should be taken, and that none of them should be horses because of the extreme scarcity of feed for them in crossing the plain to the city of Morocco, which must be their point of depar-

ture for the mountains. In the end, therefore, they settled upon three donkeys and two mules—the three donkeys for the women and the smaller and lighter articles of baggage, and the two mules for the heavier baggage and the two boys, and to serve also as an occasional change for whomsoever of the men might fall out of the march, footsore and weary.

At dawn of the third day they passed out of the gate of Saffi eastward, and were on their way to Morocco City and the perilous unknown Beyond.

“A good journey to you, Sidis,” said the porter, as he held open the gate with one hand and extended the other for a “tip.” “Where are you going?”

“*Ecfah Allah*, God will show,” said the doctor, dropping into the man’s hand some floos—copper change of which you may buy a sackful for an English shilling.

They had not gone very far out upon the dusty, and apparently trackless, plain, when they heard a voice behind them: “Peace be with you!” and, on turning to discover who

spoke, they saw an old man riding after them on a donkey. A simple haik and a great white turban were his only covering, unless you reckon a heavy rosary of green beads. His shrunken brown arms and legs were bare, and on his toes dangled a pair of worn yellow slippers. In his hand he carried a small stick, inscribed with Arabic characters; one of the holy batons sold by saints as a protection to travellers from robbers and all mishaps.

“And peace with you, friend,” said Kadoor and the doctor together. “Whither go you, friend?” continued the doctor. “I trust it may be our way, since you carry that highly-gifted blessing from some holy man, whose days, as well as yours, may Allah prolong.”

“And yours also, friends,” said the old man. Then, looking with satisfaction on the carved stick as he joined them and they moved on together, he said, “Yes. It is a present from the renowned saint, Sidi Abdallah Ben Sessi, whom God preserve till the day that is written against his name. Forty moons has it accompanied me, and by the blessings of

Allah, has preserved me from all evil. I am a Hadj, Sidis. I have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and have bowed at the tomb of the Prophet, and now I return to my people beyond the mountains. It is a weary way."

It might be mere suspicion, but the doctor thought there was a singular inquisitiveness in the old man's eye, and he resolved not to tell that they also were intending to pass beyond the mountains.

"The way is both weary and dangerous," said he.

"And what is your journey's end, Sidis?" asked the old man.

"We go to Marakesh," said the doctor.

"And after?" asked the old man.

"And after, *eeftah Allah*, God will show," answered the doctor.

There seemed, after all, no reason for suspecting the Hadj, except that as the day wore on and the heat increased he began to lag behind and doze on his donkey's neck, waking up only to tell his beads with extraordinary fervor. But, at the mid-day halt, in the

shade of a small group of palm-trees, he interested them all very much.

In this way: While they ate their frugal dinner in the warm shade they were tormented by all manner of insects, and especially by a regiment of gnats.

“Bother the beasts!” exclaimed Sandy Peebles. “Is it not a wonder, O Hadj,” he said, to draw the old man out, “that Allah should ever have made such tormenting and detestable creatures?”

Sandy’s red beard had clearly been an object of interest from the first to the Hadj, and he replied, readily:

“*Mashallah!** All creatures, O Red One, were made by Allah for some good purpose. And now, Sidis, you shall hear the history of the gnat.

“In the beginning Allah created the great sea. In His goodness he made it sweet, even as the waters of a living fountain. And God appointed a vast extent for the bounds of its habitation, and gave it wondrous power above

*It is the will of God.

all other of his created things. But the sea, raising its head like a great lion, roared terribly, and lashed the borders of the land, terrifying mankind. Seeing its power and its terror, it grew more and more arrogant. It swallowed the ships, and daring to pass the bounds set to it by the Creator, it overwhelmed the land, destroyed every living thing upon the earth, and heeded no more the rebukes and the rule of its Maker. And man and all God's creatures, saving and except the fish, sought in vain for refuge, and were drowned in the rush and whirl of its fury.

“Then Allah spoke to the sea, and said, ‘Hear, O Sea ! Thou hast laughed to scorn thy Creator ; and not hearkening to my voice, thou hast passed the limits set to thee ! Wherefore, lo ! I will now create the most insignificant of winged creatures to fly over thee, and thou shalt know that I am thy Maker and thy Lord !’

“So God made the gnat, and made him in countless myriads, like the sands of the sea itself. And God said to the gnats, ‘Settle ye

on the face of the sea and drink thereof.' And the gnats drank, and the sea became dry; and so the mighty, roaring sea became less than nothing in the bellies of the tiny gnats. And God spoke to the sea as it thus lay divided, infinitely small, in the stomachs of the gnats, and he said, 'Know ye, O Sea, that I am the Lord of all?' And God laid his ear to hear the sound of the sea in the gnats; and he heard the sea repent and acknowledge him to be the Lord. Then God said unto the gnats, 'Vomit up now the waters from within you.'

"And the gnats did so; and the sea returned unto its bed; but the waters thereof were salt because of having been in the stomach of the gnats; and God ordained that they should ever remain so, that the sea might know that He is the Lord, and that there is none other God but Himself."

"Strange and wonderful, past finding out, are the ways of Allah!" exclaimed the doctor.

Sandy made a sweep with his hand and killed several of the gnats. "Now," said he, with a snigger, "the sea is avenged!"

Then, to the surprise of everyone, the old Lalla spoke. "It is many, many moons," said she, "since last I heard that tale. Yea, never have I heard it since I was a child in my father's house."

"Then, O Lalla," said the old man, fixing on her a glittering eye, "thy father was no Arab, for the Arabs know not the tale." *

"It is true, O Hadj," said she, "that my father was not an Arab. He was a great sheikh," said she, proudly, "of the ancient and noble race beyond the mountains."

"What was his tribe, O Lalla?" asked the old man, his eye wavering but still glittering. "It may be that I knew him."

"His tribe was the Ait Yalla," said she, "and it dwelt beyond Dads among the mountains."

"And his name, my Lalla?" said the old man, clearly much moved. "His name was what?"

"His name, O Hadj, was Hammdu."

*Sir John Drummond Hay says that the legend of the "Gnat of the Sea" is peculiar to the ancient Berber tribes.

"Ah, alas! And Wallahy!" cried the old man, casting off his turban and putting dust on his head. "Hammdu is dead, and the Ait Yalla are dead! dead! dead! Slain by the Abandoned of God, the Veiled Men, the scourge of mankind and of the desert! Dead, dead! All dead!" he cried, "except me! I, even I alone, am all that is left of the Ait Yalla!"

"And I, O Hadj!" said the Lalla, with quick spirit. "And this my daughter! We also are of the Ait Yalla. What is thy name, O Hadj?" she asked, suddenly, seizing him by the skinny wrist.

"My name is Yunir! Alack and Wallahy! I am thy father's brother, and thou, doubtless, art that little Lalla Samana, who was carried off five-and-thirty years ago in the raid of the accursed one, the Sultan of Marakesh?"

Then the two relations embraced, and there was such an exhibition of weeping and wailing as even the doctor and Sandy had never seen the like of before. When it was over, and the Hadj was wiping his eyes, though still rock-

ing himself to and fro, the doctor spoke to him.

“Tell us, O Hadj, if the tale will not wake your grief too much—tell us of the destruction of the Ait Yalla by the Veiled Men, the Abandoned of God.”

“The Ait Yalla, Sidis,” said the old man, with a certain air of pride, twisting his turban and placing it on his head again, “were Shloh, Amazigh.* I speak openly, Sidis, because it is plain to me that ye also—especially Red Beard—are not Arby, but are of our race.”

“Say on, my Hadj,” said Sandy, with some astonishment in his mind, but none manifest in his manner.

“The Ait Yalla were of the noblest, and despised the sway of the Sultan of Marakesh. But five-and-thirty years ago he came with an army, as ye have heard, and ate us up. The Ait Yalla, however, were of a good courage. The men were warlike and the women industrious, and they were returning to their former

* Both words mean “noble,” and are applied by the Berber tribes to themselves.

power and wealth when the Abandoned of God, the Veiled Men, the Scourge of the Desert, swept down upon us and utterly destroyed and consumed us. What the lion had left, the hyenas and the jackals, entering in, finished. Wallahy! That is the whole tale, Sidis. And Wallahy! I alone am left to tell it!"

"Who are the Veiled Men?" asked Sandy.

"They are the Abandoned of God," answered the old man. "No man knows whence they come, and most men think that, as dirt breeds vermin, so the desert bred them!" And he spat with an explosive energy of disgust. "Before they swarmed down upon us the tale went that they had been driven from Timbuctoo and the regions round about by a new conquering king."

"But why, O Hadj," asked Sandy, "do they go veiled?"

"To hide the evil that shines from their faces," was the answer.

The old man could tell them no more, and when they resumed their journey he returned

to his donkey, his composed dozing, and the telling of his beads. Then the doctor and Sandy, as they trudged along together, held a somewhat anxious conversation.

"If what the old man says be true," said Sandy, "we have our work cut out to get within sight of the Great White City. And Lalla Samana will be rather a hindrance than a help to us if none of her people are left there."

"We can't tell," said the doctor. "The Lalla was a friend to us once, and she may be again. We can't abandon her."

"I don't propose to," said Sandy. "Good gracious! No! Nothing of the sort. I only wished you to consider if, after all we've heard, you still are of the same mind to go right through with the business."

"Most certainly," was the doctor's answer. "I'm just beginning to find it really of interest. We have now got the reading of the directions all right."

They had carefully gone over the tattooed writing on the arm of White, and that on the

head of Black before his wool grew again, while they were still on board ship, and they had thus authenticated the shorthand jotting which the doctor had made on his cuff.

“We are only now in proper case to go on. Having put your hand to the plough, you surely don't want to turn back, Sandy?”

“Not I,” said Sandy. “I only want to know, my boy, that you recognize that it is a tough job—a long and deep furrow to plough.”

“I recognize that,” said the doctor.

“Very well,” said Sandy, “we need say no more about it.”

And so they trudged steadily onward over the plain, which by that time of year was become a dreary, stony waste, with little shelter and few people. At night they pitched their tents near or within an *inzalla* or *zereba*—stations (which are commonly mere hedged enclosures) established by the Moorish Government for the convenience of travellers and caravans, and maintained by the nearest village. The keepers of the *inzalla* are permitted to make a small charge on all comers, and are

responsible for them and their goods while there.

It was not till the end of the fourth day that they came within sight of the famous city of Morocco, and after their hot, weary, and dull march the vision was refreshing.

All the afternoon they had been climbing the long bare northern slope of the Jibeelet Mountains, and the only people they had seen were a group of dirty and half-starved Arab women and children drawing water from a deep well, with the help of a very skinny donkey and a long cord. Upstill they climbed in the yellow, shimmering haze of heat, until, passing through a narrow gorge in the hills, Morocco and the valley of the Tensift opened before them, a sweet and tempting Land of Promise.

“Ah! how lovely!” cried everyone.

Green, green was the valley—green with crops and groves of date-palms, while here and there, and in and out, sparkled the waters of the Tensift River, and the innumerable little irrigating canals that were led from

it. Through a soft haze over the forest of palms peeped up the white and shining slim minarets of the city and the tall tower of the Koutoubia Mosque, topped with its golden balls, which was built centuries ago by the greatest architect the Moors have ever had. Then beyond all the seductive greenness and suggestion of juicy comfort towered some thirty or forty miles off the great wall of the Atlas Mountains, thirteen to fourteen thousand feet high, and generously capped with snow.

Since there seemed no reason to distrust the Hadj, the doctor and Sandy had confided to him their intention of crossing the mountains.

"Then enter not into the city," he had said. "There are dangers there which may delay you for ever and ever."

And the doctor and Sandy had considered that there might be, indeed, dangers in the city, but dangers other than those the old Hadj had in his mind—dangers of being waited for, dangers of being detained, dangers of losing their lives, or at the least of being ignominiously deported out of the country; for they

feared that, in the few days and more since they had left him, the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa might have had time to send a swift runner to Morocco.

This, then, was what they arranged to do: The doctor and the Hadj together would enter the city, while the rest of the party would, under cover of darkness, work round to the eastern side, towards the mountains, where they would all reunite in the morning.

Therefore it was that, in the midst of the palm-groves, they parted towards sunset, the main party resting, while the Hadj and the doctor hastened on—the one to hear the news among the common people, and the other to visit, and get some necessary supplies from, the Moorish friend of all Englishmen who visit Marakesh—the Sid' Bu Bekr el Ghanjani.

CHAPTER XVIII

THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

THE appointed place of re-assembly was the saint's tomb, just beyond one of the eastern gates of the city—the gate known as the Bab Aghmat. The party, led by the active Kadoor, had camped near by under some trees, and long before dawn Kadoor, Sandy, and Jim were awake, and anxiously looking out for the coming of the doctor and the Hadj. They heard the voice of the mueddin aloft in the minarets of one mosque and another call the first hour of prayer, just as the dawn was breaking: "*Allah Akhbar!* God is great! Prayer is better than sleep! Come to prayer!" And then they knew that the gates were opened. Kadoor slipped nearer the city between the saint's tomb and the Bab Aghmat. Presently he returned.

"He comes! The Sidi Tabeeb! And he comes in haste," said he.

Soon appeared the doctor.

"We must up and away," said he. "The hue and cry is out against us. The Sid' Bu Bekr was amazed to see me. If we had all gone into the city, we'd have been spotted at once. *'Three Sons of the English, one with a flaming beard, and all dressed as Moors; a slim page, Moorish or Jewish——'*"

"That's Susannah," said Jim.

"—*'two women, an old and a young, and two boys, a black and a white.'* That's the description of our party sent on by a runner from the wily Basha. The orders are out to all the authorities to seize us and send us bound to the young Sultan here in Marakesh, and the wonder is we've got so far. A day later, I dare say, and we shouldn't have got near this town."

"Then, by gosh!" cried Sandy, "if the way isn't blocked into the mountains we had better be off."

"If it *is* blocked?" said Jim.

"We must get through," said the doctor, "even if we have to find another way."

He turned and inquired of Kadoor if he

knew of any other route through the mountains than the usual one.

"I know not," said Kadoor, meditatively shaking his head. Then he brightened. "The Hadj Yunir will know," said he. "And, lo! he comes."

The Hadj appeared very sad and tearful; and still the dawn grew in brightness while they stood and talked in the shadow of the saint's tomb (which was shaped like half an egg-shell set on a white cube).

"Allah be praised," said the doctor, "that you have come in time!"

"Sidi Tabeeb," said the old man, "think you I have concealed from you aught concerning myself? Answer, I pray you!"

"You have indeed told us many things concerning yourself, O Hadj," said the doctor.

"And ye have concealed from me," lamented the Hadj, "that ye are Sons of the English and infidels! Ah, wallahy! It has not been well done, Sidi Tabeeb! For thus ye have made of no account the good of my weary pilgrimage to the Prophet's Tomb! And yet—I

call the saint here to witness!" (and he stretched out his skinny brown arm towards the *Koubba*, or Saint-house)—"Ali Shereef!" he cried. "I cannot curse these infidels, for I love them! Wallahy!"

"When brother meets brother, O Hadj," said the doctor, "the heart of man is ever better than his teaching. But we must talk of these things later. Now we must up and away. Thou hast heard of our danger, O my friend?"

"I have heard," he answered. "Does not the whole city boil with the news of you like a pot? Ye will haste away as ye have come."

"Nay, my Hadj. We must go forward—we cannot turn back."

"Behold how stiff-necked these Sons of the English are!" exclaimed the simple old man, as they turned towards the little encampment. "Truly, stiff-necked and unyielding are ye!"

"True," said the doctor. "And now we must go forward, and not back. And since dangers may lie thick on the usual routes,

we ask thee, O Hadj, if thou canst lead us through the mountains—thou who knowest the mountains—by a route which few may know?”

“There is such a route,” said the old man, putting on a more active and alert manner, and pointing directly to the south. “But,” he said, suddenly turning on the doctor, “what is your destination?”

“Dads,” answered the doctor.

The old man shook his head.

“Then,” said he, “that”—pointing to the south—“is too long, the news concerning you would be in Dads long before you.”

“Very well,” said Sandy, “we had better push on the shortest way; we may keep ahead of the news.”

“We *may* do that,” said the doctor, “for I believe the warning about us only reached Marakesh yesterday. We can avoid the villages as much as possible.”

“And make our dress more Berber-like as we go on,” said Sandy.

So it was that, without waiting to eat or



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drink, they struck their tents, and were speeding away towards the foot-hills of the Atlas before the freshness of the dawn was over. Their beasts were well rested, and they made nearly five miles an hour. East-by-south they travelled, to avoid the considerable frontier-post of Sidi Rehal, where they might have been stopped, and soon clearing the last belt of palm-trees, they were in the open plain, which, oddly enough, was the very district of Misfiwa that gave the Basha they had escaped from his title. They stayed not in all the plain, but fording the Wad, or river, Urika, and later the Wad el Meha, or Salt River, they pushed on, and halted for breakfast only when they were in the mouth of the first glen of the Atlas, at Imin Zat.

They rested and ate and drank with relish and delight under a tree on the bank of the stream, and it would scarcely be possible to find a sweeter or more beautiful spot in the wide world. The hills, clothed in groves of olives, sloped gently down to the edge of the stream, which rushed and brawled along, clear

as crystal; and on one side the tabia houses, with wide, thatched roofs, of the village of Imin Zat rose tier upon tier.

They made haste to cross the stream before the people of the village should be much abroad and discover them. Led by the Hadj, they turned south-by-east up the glen, and the village on the heights was hid from them by the olive-trees and the tall bushes of oleander amid which they marched. After passing an open place, littered with ashes, bones, and offal, which showed where a weekly market was held, they turned eastward again, climbed a rugged hump of the mountains in order to strike a ford of the River Ghadat, by a ruined, ancient bridge, about eight miles above Sidi Rehal.

On the narrow, precipitous track on the well-wooded mountain-side came their first adventure. Either Isaac Goldstein, or the donkey he rode, was impatient to pass the mules laden with the heavy baggage and led by the Hadj and Kadoor. There was no room, however, even for a sure-footed donkey to per-

form that feat, and both donkey and rider toppled clean over the precipice.

“O my blessed dear life!” yelled Isaac. “I’m gone!”

Happily, both he and the donkey were caught in the branches of a pine tree about forty feet down, where the donkey and he brayed and roared their loudest. Isaac was below, and the donkey above, with his heels tickling the air.

“Hold on! Be still, you idiot!” roared Sandy down to Isaac, “and we’ll get you up.”

But that was more easily said than done. Moreover, it was doubly dangerous to attempt the rescue, for the donkey was laden with the ammunition and the rifles and shot-guns of the party, and these latter were loaded.

“We must unpack the mules and use the tent-ropes,” said the doctor. “Give a hand here, Jim,” he called to his brother.

Of course the whole party was stopped, and while Isaac still roared and the donkey brayed and kicked, and the women looked on in agony and wrung their hands, the two boys

laughed and danced, White crying, "Here's a lark!" and Black (as always) imitating him and chortling, "Here's a la'k!"

"Let me go down," said Jim. "I'm youngest and lightest. Hold your tongues, you noisy beggars!" he called to the boys.

When the ropes were tied together Sandy and the doctor lowered Jim down.

It was no easy matter to get near the donkey, for he made very free play with his hoofs. Jim, however, got at him from beneath. He first undid the pack-saddle and all attached thereto, and fastened it to the rope, which was hauled up. It was lowered again, and Jim contrived to bind it about the donkey's four legs, and so he was hauled up. Next the rope was lowered for Isaac, and last for Jim himself. And so the adventure, which at first threatened to be fatal, ended in laughter. The donkey, finding himself right side up and on his pins again, lashed out freely at everyone and everything, so that he almost flung himself over a second time.

"He'll bray himself hoarse," said Jim.

"If he does, it will be a miraculous and profitable change," said Sandy, the punster.

"What a beastly pun!" said Jim.

"Truly and really *beastly*," said Sandy.

So joking and laughing (for the mountain air was of a most rare and intoxicating quality), while Kadoor lifted up his beautiful tenor voice in a Moorish love song ("O Du-du, your mouth is like a ring!") and the devout Hadj told his beads and murmured, "O Giver of good to all! O Protector of the Poor! O Creator!" they continued their way to the ford of the Ghadat.

There a more serious adventure awaited them, when they arrived late in the afternoon. The ford was dangerous, though the water was not very deep, for the stream was wide and strong and swift, insomuch that it was only by piling the baggage on the top of the pack-saddle of the tallest mule that it could be got across dry.

When they scrambled ashore on the further side, wet and in disorder, they were astonished to find themselves surrounded by a threatening

company of more than thirty stalwart Berbers, armed with guns and swords and daggers.

Before he was aware, they had laid hands on Sandy, as if, because he was the biggest and most bearded, they imagined him the leader. Neither Sandy nor any of the others had a weapon handy, so resistance was hopeless. But protest and craft might be of some avail.

“What means this, sirs?” demanded Sandy loftily, in his best Arabic. “Why do ye stop inoffensive and unarmed travellers?”

“We have command to stop and arrest,” said one who seemed to be in authority, “three infidel sons of the English, with others, and one of them wears a flaming beard.” And he looked with sufficient meaning at Sandy, while he waved forward his friends to secure the others.

“Good people,” said Sandy calmly, “ye are mistaken in us. We are not what you have heard of us. We are *Amazigh, Shloh*,* even as yourselves.”

* Noble.

“Nay, but ye are infidels, strangers, and rebels,” said the leader; “and ye must haste with us now to Sidi Rehal.”

Now that, above all things, they wished to avoid doing.

“See, friends,” said Sandy boldly—and his Arabic was as good, or as bad, as the leader’s —“we yield us to you, for, lo! ye have the power to compel us. But the day is far spent, and we and our beasts have made a long journey this day. Let us rest here to-night with you in peace, and to-morrow let us go with you to Sidi Rehal.”

That seemed so modest a request, and so much, evidently, in keeping with the leader’s inclination, that he turned to his friends and asked them if he should agree to stay there for the night. They were all of that mind. So the Berbers (who were unmounted) marched their captives and the beasts through the lentisk bushes, among which they had been hid, and into a clump of olive-trees.

There the Englishmen unconcernedly directed the pitching of their two tents, while

the Berbers looked on, as if in doubt what so little protest (and absolutely no resistance) might mean. Some of them, seeing their captives prepare a fire and put on a kettle to boil, turned to and made a fire also for themselves, and produced three small guinea-fowl to roast. But the captives had a big pot in which they were going to cook a *kuskussoo*, or stew, of mutton and vegetables (which they had brought from Marakesh).

“Let us be friends, at least for this night,” said Sandy to the Berbers. “Cook your birds in our pot, and let us all eat together.”

“Be it so,” said the leader. “If ye are indeed Shloh,” he said presently, “tell me the Shloh word for ‘river.’” And he pointed to the stream just crossed.

“Asif,” answered Sandy. By good luck he knew that word. Yet, lest he might be asked another and not know (which was likely), he resolved to have the advantage of what should seem entire frankness. “I,” said he, “have been much in the north, where Shloh is but little spoken——”

("Not spoken at all," said Jim in English.)

"—But," continued Sandy, "these," indicating the Hadj and Kadoor, "will speak Shloh with you all the night."

The leader thereupon turned to the Hadj and spoke earnestly with him for some time in the native Berber speech. And after that, the kettle being boiled, the doctor made tea in the Moorish fashion—with plenty of sugar and mint—and invited the Berbers to drink with them.

Though well-to-do Moors use tea very much, to the poorer Berbers, withdrawn among the mountains, tea is a rare and highly prized luxury. Therefore, these wild natives appreciated the doctor's politeness all the more. The leader was obviously becoming troubled in his mind about his captives.

"If," said he, "it be true—as the Hadj says—that ye be Shloh, and that ye travel to Dads to visit long-lost relations and to perform works of healing, then," he continued, with apparent irrelevance, "what have we to do with orders from Marakesh? Are we the slaves of

the accursed Arbies of the Sultan of Marakesh?"

("So Rob Roy," observed Sandy in English, "might have talked in Scotland of the accursed Sassenach a hundred and fifty years ago.") "We had hoped, O friends," said Sandy to the leader in Arabic, "that being Shloh, ye would disdain to take orders from Marakesh."

The man frowned, and looked on the ground and meditated.

"What did you tell him, O Hadj?" Sandy asked in a whisper.

"Allah forgive me for lying," said the Hadj, "and for allying myself with unbelievers! But I said we all journey together, that we are long-lost brothers, and that the Sidi Tabeeb is a very great Tabeeb and a very great wizard, travelling to Dads to impart his learning and his skill to his own people! May Allah forgive me!"

"He will!" said Sandy, grasping the hand of the Hadj.

When it was dark they all supped together. And after they had supped, Kadoor sang songs

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in his lovely tenor voice; Sandy and the doctor told tales from the *Arabian Nights*, and the Berber leader and one or two of his friends told stories of hunting and fighting in the mountains; so that, when it was time to go to sleep, they were the best friends under the dome of heaven.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIRST VIEW OF THE WHITE CITY

IN the morning the Berbers were of the same mind as when they had gone to sleep the night before. By the beard of the Prophet! the strangers were the truest and most agreeable men they had ever met, and a thousand condemnations light on their own and their ancestors' heads if they betrayed them to the cruel Moors of Marakesh! But let them bethink them they might not thus get off so easily from all they might encounter; especially how did they hope to pass the kasbah of the Kaid of Teluet unchallenged and undetained? That they might pass unnoted, therefore, let them clothe themselves more like the men of the mountains, and less like "Arbies."

"Moreover," said the Berber leader, "you will need thicker garments when ye rise

up on the mountains and near the eternal snows."

So they bargained for as many as they needed of the black goat's hair cloaks in which the mountaineers wrap themselves, and then they parted and went their several ways in mutual esteem.

Our party went on by the difficult valley of the Ghadat, sometimes on the river brink, and sometimes by the precipitous mountain-side, until they came to Zarkten, where stands the first of those wonderful and formidable castles which abound in the Atlas and beyond, and which are so unlike anything Moorish or Arabic.

They spent the night at Zarkten village, and next day climbed the vast, bare, and windy wall of the Atlas, and descended toward Télet. They avoided the village and the great castle, keeping to the north of them, and pushed on toward Tiurassin. Then they were against the rocky and desert plain which lies between the two Atlases. They passed over the land of Seven Undulations ("Sebaa Shaa-

bat"), where there was neither man nor beast, nor bird nor vegetable, and three days later they came to Dads, without adventure.

Dads is one of the peculiar villages of that region, which are sunk below the general level of the desert plain, so that when you are not near one of them, you see nothing but a monotony of level bareness. Suddenly a break or fissure catches the eye, and you discover what seems to have been once a deep and wide river-bed, at the bottom of which now flows a small, clear stream. The rest of the ancient river-bed is filled with little water-cuttings for irrigation, with palm-trees and almond-trees, with fruits and crops, with cottages and castles, and swarms with a prosperous population.

Such a place is Dads.

A few miles before reaching the valley, the aspect of the country was of the most dreary and awful bareness.

The general level (as shown by the doctor's aneroid) was about 5,000 feet above the sea.

To the north towered the limestone crags,

backed by the snow-covered peaks of the great Atlas.

On the south—with thirty miles of bare, hot, stony plain between—rose the appalling heights of the Jebel Saghru, whose black and red rocks, twisted into strange, fantastic shapes, looked like the mountains of an evil dream.

Then a few steps farther, and the Dads valley rose from the depth of the ground into their view,—Dads, filled with sweet and green, soft and cool delights; a garden sunk in the midst of a forbidding wilderness; a Paradise in a desolate and burning Gehennam.

But they were on the edge of the precipitous descent before they took in the remarkable castellate appearance of the village, with its battlemented walls, its great square flanking towers, its forts for defence by the watercourses, all built in a style which is like nothing seen elsewhere out of these trans-Atlas regions, and which answers only to the description of ancient Phœnician and Carthaginian architecture. And in that continent of Africa, where men

and Nature seem alike oblivious of time and change, nothing is more likely than that the dominating influence of more than two thousand years ago should still prevail in these neglected spots of Paradise beyond the great mountains. Before the incursion of the fierce, religious horsemen of Mohammed; before the power of mighty Rome prevailed on both sides of the Mediterranean—there was widespread in North Africa the might of that Carthage which has inscribed on the roll of Fame the names of Queen Dido and of Salammbô, of Hasdrubal, of Hanno, and of Hannibal. There can be no doubt that the Carthaginians maintained for centuries intimate relations of conquest and of trade with the wild tribes of the interior, whence they drew their wealth; and there is every likelihood that these same tribes would keep in everlasting memory the lessons of building taught them by their conquerors for so eternal a necessity as defence.

When the party was descried descending into the valley, there scouted out on foot from the village small scattered parties.

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Then the Lalla Samana, in the greatest excitement, trilled out the shrill cry of the Zak-erib, the hail and the welcome among the Berber women, and Kadoor and the Hadj uttered wild halloos to announce that they were friends.

Then the scouting parties came racing on, followed by others from the village, men and women, old and young, and small children clothed in nothing but white, sleeveless shirts.

When the parties met, about midway down the steep descent, the Hadj recognised and was embraced by a number of cousins. Then all the strangers, without inquiry, were kissed and wept over, and were escorted into the village, amid laughter and snatches of song, the old men and women babbling their loudest, the children screaming and tumbling over each other, and the young men firing off their guns in glee.

The simple heartiness and generosity of the welcome surprised the Englishmen, and moved them almost to tears.

It showed what so many people are slow to

guess and slow to understand—that there is a great deal of sweet human nature in man all the world over, and that the first prompting of the unsophisticated man is to receive and treat any other man as a brother.

The whole company was received by the people of Dads with the greatest hospitality. The chief cousin of the old Hadj was a Sheereef in the place, and prosperous at that, and into his house—which was large, and included one of the flanking towers—were received all save Kadoor and Isaac Goldstein.

Kadoor had found a relation of his own to stay with, and Isaac had the marks of his race upon him in feature and dress, and was claimed by the Jews of Dads, of whom there were not a few.

They remained there and were feasted on simple fare for two whole days. The delay was necessary, both for rest and for preparation to prosecute their expedition to its end.

On the second night the whole party except Isaac sat together aloft on the roof of the Shereef's tower.

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You enter a Berber house from the street into a dark and dusty passage, which ascends on a slope, and brings you to the first floor, where are most of the living apartments of the family. Again you ascend on a slope of hardened mud or cement, instead of by stairs. The second floor is occupied with a great room, some thirty feet long, smoky and noisy, where the women cook and weave cloth on hand-loom, and where babies squall. Up another slope you go and reach a similar room, except that it is not lighted by slits in the wall, but by holes in the roof.

Up another slope still you pass, and then you are on the roof, about sixty feet from the ground, though all around you smaller turrets—for watching and shooting—rise still higher. In the midst of the roof is a highly decorated room, with rugs and carpets on the floor, and there the heads of the household may meet for contemplation, gossip, and prayer. In that room, and on the open roof without, the company was met together on the second night.

The summer air was soft and pleasant, and a

five days' old moon hung in the south-western sky, shining dispassionately on them in Dads, on the wan and ghostly Atlas heights to the far north, and on the grim, black, and twisted shapes of the Jebel Saghru to the near south.

"And where, O Hadj, is the Pass of the Lion's Leap?" asked the doctor, who, with the Hadj and Sandy Peebles and the Shereef, was looking over the southern parapet to the mountains.

"Behold!" said the Hadj, and pointed. "See you there against the sky a great rock in shape like a lion crouching to spring? Beneath that is the pass of the Lion's Leap."

The doctor scratched a match and looked steadily at the compass he held in his hand.

"*South-south-east*," he murmured. "So much confirmation," said he, turning to Sandy, "we have got of the truth of our directions."

He and Sandy had earnestly discussed the whole matter, and agreed that it was best—indeed, that it was absolutely necessary—to take these friendly people of Dads into their

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confidence—to the extent, at least, of declaring their intention of exploring the mysterious White City. And they were the more determined to that by hearing that the Ait Yalla—whom the Hadj had believed were exterminated—survived in small numbers, having hid themselves in secret places that the Veiled Men did not know of, and that they were recovering their strength, and longed for an opportunity of “having it out” with the Veiled Men. The Men of Dads were near relatives of the Ait Yalla, and were ready to help them to the extent of their power. And that had seemed to the doctor and Sandy their opportunity.

“And how many men of war, say you, O Shereef,” asked the doctor, “are willing to follow you to avenge their brethren of the Ait Yalla on the Veiled Men?”

“Ten times ten men will go, O Tabeeb,” answered the Shereef, “to attack the Abandoned of God. More would be too many to feed on the desert way, and they will be equipped with gun, and sabre, and dagger. Well I wish, O Tabeeb, we all had such guns

as ye have brought from the land of the Roumin."*

"But ye say the Veiled Men," said Sandy, "have no guns, but only long spears and daggers. It should not be difficult, O Shereef, to overcome them."

"The Veiled Men, Sidi Red Beard," said the Shereef, "are jackals and hyenas. They prowl by night and stab in the dark, and without noise. They are without honor or courage; therefore is it difficult to deal with them."

"And ye have no horsemen?" said Sandy.

"The Shloh people do not ride horses like the camel-drivers!" said the Shereef, spitting in contempt of the Arabs, for whom "camel-drivers" is a common term of reproach.

When they had thus talked they decided that it was time to go to bed, since they proposed to make a start immediately after dawn. They returned to the occupants of the room on the roof, whence flowed harmonious sounds of laughter and song.

* There seems to be no doubt that in this name is buried the Berber memory of the ancient Romans.

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There were assembled not only Jim Great-hed and Kadoor, and Susannah and the two Lallas, but also several sons and daughters of the Shereef; for the Berbers, though Mohammedans, have not the objection of the Arabs to friendly converse between men and women.

“To sleep! to sleep, my children!” said the Shereef. “To-morrow at dawn we set off for yonder.”

The doctor had found the most obstinate objection among the Berbers to speak of the White City, or to allude to it, save very remotely, so great was their superstitious awe of it.

“And we go also, Sidi Tabeeb—do we not?” said the Lalla Samana.

“Since ye wish to go to your own people. I would it could be arranged otherwise, Lalla Samana,” said the doctor. “There will probably be blows and shedding of blood, from which it is well that women should be absent.”

“Nay, rather,” said the Lalla, “it would be well to wish that we women could fight. I would that I could strike like a man, when the

blows are to be delivered to avenge the destruction of my father's house!"

"I can load a gun," said Susannah. "I have loaded Sidi Jim's gun," she added, and then blushed and hid her face on the sleeve of her young friend, the Lalla Samana's daughter, Zara.

"I have a dagger," said the shy and pretty Zara. "I have it always. The Basha gave it to me." And she drew the thing from its jewelled sheath at her waist.

And so they separated to sleep. At dawn they were all astir, to eat a dried fig or two (which were as hard as biscuit) and to drink a cup of water before setting forth on their march from Dads, to which it was doubtful if the Englishmen would return again even if they lived. They said their adieus, and in ten minutes after climbing up from Dads and striking into the desert, the deep-sunk valley was to their eyes as if it did not exist, save for the top of a tall tower or two which showed above the general level.

After five days' difficult journey over the

black, igneous rocks of the Jebel Saghru, the whole expedition of more than a hundred men and three women, with mules and donkeys, encamped for the night a few miles both from the mysterious White City and from the fertile valley where the remnant of the Ait Yalla had re-established themselves. They had made a forced march that day in the hope of reaching the valley of the Ait Yalla by nightfall. But utter weariness made them halt some time before the sun went down. The Shereef searched around and chose a spot for their camp, on the slope of a small hill, which was strewn with worn bowlders like a rocky coast. He chose that spot because there was there a spring of water—albeit the water was bitter—and because it seemed easy of defence and incapable of surprise; and it behoved them to be cautious, for the Veiled Men could not be far off. They lighted no fires for fear of attracting hostile notice, but supped on their dried figs with water from the bitter spring.

When the moon (which was approaching the full, being, to be exact, eleven days old) rose

over the desert, certain of the party climbed the rock on the hill-top which was to be the look-out for the night. They were Sandy and the doctor, accompanied by the Hadj and the Shereef of Dads. They all climbed the hill, as Moses ascended Mount Pisgah, to get a glimpse of the Promised Land.

When they reached the top they lay down, lest they might be spied by an enemy.

“Lo!” said the Shereef, “look beneath the moon.”

He would not point; such was his superstition about the moon and the Place of Promise.

Sandy and the doctor looked eagerly for what they had come so far to see. They looked; and at once it was plain why that which they saw was universally known as the White City. The general aspect of the dreary, barren and rocky country was one of blackness—black or dark-red rocks, with black-grey volcanic dust and scoriæ.

In the midst of that appeared, of a perfect whiteness, some miles distant, but seeming in

that excessively dry air infinitely nearer, acre upon acre of gigantic ruins. Masses of stone, forming broken temples and towers of an Egyptian, or rather a Phœnician, style, cubes and columns—some prostrate, some still erect—obelisks and pedestals, slabs and bases, huge and cyclopean, were piled and huddled in immense and appalling confusion.

They gazed and gazed, and a strange feeling of sadness and sorrow seized them; for nowhere, neither in those white ruins nor in the hideous black country around, was there any sign of life. All was silent—silent as a cemetery.

“I can’t stand this,” said Sandy. “I must go and have a look at the place.”

The doctor was as much agog as he.

“Come, Hadj,” said he, “let us go and look. Nothing more. The distance is small, and there is no creature to be seen. Come, Shereef.”

“Not for a thousand dollars!” exclaimed the Shereef. “The place is bad by day, but worse by night. It is tenanted by Djins, the horrid

fiends that thick men's blood with cold. I go not! Go ye not!"

"There is nought to fear," said the doctor. "Come, Hadj. Thou hast no fear."

"I have fear, Sidi Tabeeb," answered the Hadj. "But I go, because both thou and I are under the protection of Allah."

So the three descended from the rock, and slipped noiselessly in the moonlight across the gloomy plain to the white ruins. When they were among them the doctor and Sandy were compelled more and more to wonder at their magnificence. There were still sections of wall standing, and they showed to be from three to six feet thick, and composed of vast blocks of squared limestone, fitted together without cement. Limestone! And so far as the doctor and Sandy knew, there was no limestone nearer than the Atlas Mountains. They passed, still wondering, down what appeared to have been a wide street or way, which must have been magnificent and imposing in its heyday. On either side were palaces and garden walls, broken and ruined, the great stones of

which they were built being pushed more and more from their place by coarse growths of vegetation lodged in their joints and crevices, while the base of the walls was strewn with vast blocks, some square to form parts of walls, and some cylindrical to form parts of pillars, and all eaten into with ages of weather. Sandy and the doctor were thinking it remarkable that no statuary or ornament was to be seen, when they came upon a strangely shaped block about the height of a man. They considered it a moment.

“Great Heavens!” exclaimed Sandy Peebles, “it’s a fist.”

It was, indeed, a fist, rudely shaped but well proportioned, and broken off at the wrist. It lay with the knuckles buried in the ground, and the height of it before them was the length of the upper finger-joints. The back of the hand was on the level of their eyes! What must be the size of the statue of which that was a fragment? And where was it to be found?

They passed on, and came into a great open space.

"It must be the forum or market-place," said the doctor, thinking of the directions.

"And that," said Sandy, "must be the broken pillar."

He pointed to a triumphal column or obelisk in the midst of the place, broken down to twice the height of a man. They marched over the débris through the white moonlight to the column.

"*'From the broken pillar in the middle of the market-place, look due east,'*" murmured the doctor, quoting from the directions, and looking at his compass.

At that moment there broke on their ears a kind of wail, which made their flesh creep.

"*U-lu-lu-lu!*"

What was it? The cry of a jackal or of a human being? They were truly alarmed, for until then they had heard no sound whatever, nor seen any sign of life. Alarm deepened to fear when on another side another sound broke on the air.

"*Ha! ha! ha! ha!*"

It was the mirthless, hacking laugh of the hyena, or an imitation of the same.

Then, as they looked around them, tall, ghostly figures appeared on this side and that—on all sides—rising from among the tumbled blocks of stone as if from tombs. And they had all the appearance of sheeted dead; for not only were they draped in white from head to foot, but their heads also were as if bound with napkins. They moved forward without a sound; and the moonlight revealed no faces—nothing but a black hollow in the region of the eyes. They were the Veiled Men!

On this side and on that and on a third side something whizzed out, and before they knew, all three had a lithe loop about the neck, and were jerked violently to the ground, when the white ghosts with a loud cry swept down upon them.

CHAPTER XX

HOW ISAAC MADE THE MOORS RUN

THE shereef of Dads had remained lying on the rock watching the progress of the three over the plain and in among the white ruins. The great blocks of masonry and the fragments of wall now and then hid them from view, but he saw them plainly again when they came out in the open space in the midst of the ruined city. He saw them plainly stand in the moonlight, and then plainly he saw the incursion of white, shadowy figures upon them.

“The Djins!” he ejaculated to himself, and still gazed with all his might. But nothing more was to be seen—they had vanished like vapor.

After waiting a little while to see if his companions would return, he descended to the little camp in extreme perturbation of mind. He took aside one of his Dads men, and, whis-

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pering to him what had happened, dispatched him to keep a look-out on the rock. Then he sought the comrades of the vanished men.

“Wallahy!” he cried, breaking in upon the group, which consisted of Jim Greathed and Kadoor, and Isaac the Jew, and the Lalla Samana and her daughter, and Susannah—the two boys were asleep, wrapped in the goat’s hair cloak of the good-natured Kadoor. “Wallahy!” he cried, shaking both his fists aloft. “They were resolved to visit the Place of Terror and now the Djins that haunt the place have got them all three—the Sidi Tabeeb, the Sidi Red Beard, and my cousin the Hadj.”

“Ah! wallahy!” cried Kadoor and the Lalla Samana together, while Isaac interpreted for Jim’s benefit.

“The Djins?” said Jim. “What Djins?”

The Shereef told the whole story, and described the ghostly appearance of the Djins.

“The Djins,” said Jim, “are more likely to be the Veiled Men you speak about.”

“It is well and truly said!” exclaimed the Lalla Samana. “And whether they be Djins

or Veiled Men, I, even I, am the one person to deliver the Sidis and the Hadj out of their hands."

"Thou?" exclaimed the Shereef.

"Even I, O Shereef," said the Lalla. "Lo!" she added, pointing to the tattooing about her neck, "I alone have the charm on me that can defy the witchcraft of the White ruins——"

"Name them not!" exclaimed the Shereef, stopping his ears.

"And I alone," continued the Lalla, "have the secret of the treasure of the Roumin that is therein."

"Wallahy!" exclaimed the Shereef, with a shudder. "It is not to be named. It is a delusion and snare of evil spirits."

"Nevertheless, the Sidis seek it," said the Lalla, "and therefore it is that they went to explore the place."

"Alack! they are then lost for ever," cried the Shereef.

"Nay, indeed," cried the Lalla. "They are my friends, and I go to aid them. Who go with me?"

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“Certainly I go!” said Jim, “Djins or no Djins!”

“And I!” said Kadoor.

But before other promises of adherence could be uttered, a cry of warning came from the look-out on the top of the rock.

“Hush!” said the Shereef. “Let me hear the word from the rock!” Then he called up to the look-out, “I listen, O son of Haddu!”

“I see,” called down the look-out, “a great company of horsemen riding on our track from the North; and their riding is like that of the sons of Askura!”

“The accursed sons of Askura? * What do they seek?” exclaimed the Shereef, at once setting off to climb the rock to see for himself.

While he was gone, Jim considered within himself what was to be done. On all his adventure, he had not yet been truly face to face with any responsibility. But now—! He felt he stood alone. How must he decide for the best? His brother and Sandy were gone—

* Askura is a district near Dads, inhabited by Arabs, who are constantly at feud with the Berbers around them.

perhaps they had been murdered. In any case, must he not find out what was become of them, and rescue them if they lived? Was not that his duty? However much he thought round and through and through the difficulty, that was his one conclusion.

“Yes,” he said, speaking aloud, “that’s what we must do; and we had better do it at once!”

He was addressing the Lalla Samana. He now had enough Arabic to make himself understood, as well as to understand most things that were said.

“And we must carry guns!—all the guns!” said the Lalla. “For the Sidis have no guns with them!”

“And the children,” said Jim, “and the girls had better stay with your friends till we come back.”

“Stay?” cried Susannah and her friend together. “You will not leave us behind!” said Susannah. “Oh! never will I agree! You cannot leave me behind, Sidi Jim!” she cried. “What if you never come back? No, we also

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will go with you to rescue the Sidi Tabeeb and the Sidi Sandy! Will we not?" said she, turning to Zara.

"Of a truth we will!" said Zara. "And we will carry guns. Does the Sidi Jim think we fear?"

But the Shereef broke in upon them, sweeping down again from the rock.

"Arise, my children!" he cried aloud to the whole camp. "To arms! An enemy is upon us, riding on horses. They are not Askura," he said aside. "They wear the dress of the soldiers of the Sultan of Marakesh."

"It's the Basha, perhaps!" exclaimed Jim.

"Wallahy!" cried Kadoor. "The Basha Mohammed Misfiwa!"

"Scatter and hide among the rocks, my children!" cried the Shereef.

The Dads men, being quite used to such alarms, silently did as they were bid; and Jim and his friends, seizing the guns that were handy, and rousing the sleeping boys, did likewise; it was hopeless to set out for the white ruins at the moment.

In an instant or two every living creature had disappeared from the white moonlight that flooded the barren plain, but the black shadows of the rocks were peopled with life. In the silence the muffled thud of galloping horses became heard in the soft dust of the track over the plain, with now and then the sharp ring of a horseshoe against a stone. The scent and the sound of strange animals provoked the hidden donkeys and mules of the Dads party to a salute, and they lifted up their voices in a discordant bray which could not be subdued.

That was completely fatal to the hope of remaining hid. The foremost horsemen heard, and pulled up, and came on cautiously—looking like mounted monks in their full white jelabs with the hoods drawn over their heads—and gradually those behind the advance guard circled round.

“O Men of Dads!” called the leader of the advance, “come forth from your hiding. We know ye are men of Dads, and that ye have in your company men concerning whom ye are

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deceived. They pretend to be true believers, and are infidels—to be friends and brothers of your people, and are truly Roumin—sons of the English. And by this ye may know that we know them: one of them has a beard of flame! We are the servants of the eminent Basha Mohammed Misfiwa, who comes hither on the business of our lord the Sultan—whose days may Allah prolong! We invite you to come forth and to parley with us!”

The feared but still at the last unexpected event had befallen, and the escaping party was overtaken by the wary and cunning Basha! After all that had happened, what kind of treatment could they expect from him if they were given up, and what compromise or escape could they contrive without the experienced aid of the doctor and Sandy? These were the questions that flew through Jim’s mind.

“Allah protect us! But these are strange things he utters!” said the Shereef of Dads, before making any reply to the horseman.

“Lies, lies, all lies!” said Kadoor in haste,

as if to hinder any other from replying otherwise.

“Nay, Kadoor,” said Jim, promptly, “we cannot succeed by deceit. Moreover, I will not deceive these men, who have been our friends. Ye have treated us, O Shereef,” said he to the old man, “with kindness and confidence; therefore, let the truth be known to you that I, my brother the Tabeeb, and Sandy of the Red Beard are sons of the English, but we are not Infidels.”

“Ye do not deny Allah?” said the Shereef hurriedly. “It is well. But whether or no, all brave men are brothers, and we cannot surrender the guests who have reposed trust in us and who have eaten our bread! See, now,” he continued, “with our guns we can hold these rocks against all the soldiers of the Sultan of Marakesh. (What is the Sultan of the Marakesh to us?) And my son, who is fleet of foot as a gazelle, will run to our relatives the Ait Yalla for help to drive them clean away!”

“Why should we,” said Jim, “be the cause

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of shedding your people's blood? Moreover," he added, "if we fight and afterward fall into the hands of the Basha, it will be worse for us even than now; and already have I, O Sher-eef, been once condemned by him to death! But while you parley with this horseman, we will escape and steal away in the shadow of the great rock, and go to the white ruins to find our friends, for without them we are nothing."

"Wallahy!" said the Shereef. "But the Djins have them in their hold."

"Sidi Jim says well," broke in Kadoor. "Better the tender mercies of Allah in the desert, or even of the Djins in the White City, rather than the hold of the Basha among his own people!"

"Kadoor says well," said the Lalla Samana. "I and my daughter would rather meet all the Djins or Veiled Men beyond, than the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa in his wrath! For if he finds me, he will most surely kill me!"

"Ho, there!" called the waiting horseman. "Answer, or we shoot."

"Peace be with you! Go, then!" whispered

the Shereef hurriedly to his guests, "and I will hold him in talk." Then leaping into sight upon a boulder of black rock, he answered the horseman: "What do you desire of us? And why do ye come to trouble us thus in the night? Would not the morning have served for your purpose?" And so forth. But, meanwhile, Jim was encountering difficulty in getting his party off. He had hurriedly explained in a low voice to Isaac that they must 'hook it' just as they were, and would Isaac bring the boys along?

"What!" exclaimed Isaac, also in a low but a frantic voice; "and leave all the traps and the mokes behind? O my blessed dear life! Never, never, never! Not for all the Bashas in the world. I will not. Not a second time. S'welp me! And 'ow can we carry off the loot!—the plunder!—the gold and di'monds and jewels, without the bloomin' mokes? We can't! That's a certainty!"

And before Jim knew what he was about, he was off among the beasts, dragging the boys with him.

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“Isaac, you idiot! Come here!” cried Jim as loud as he dared.

“By the beard of the Prophet,” exclaimed Kadoor, “if we *can* take the beasts and the furniture it will be well.” And he charged after Isaac.

There was wonder and murmuring among the Dads men at all that, and the old Shereef turned.

“What is amiss?” he asked. “And why—why such turmoil?”

But before an answer could be made in words, a more demonstrative answer was exhibited before the eyes of all. Isaac, having hurriedly strapped on the mules and donkeys such property as he could find, had mounted himself and the boys to ride away. The brutes, however, had no mind to do as Isaac wished them, and as soon as they found themselves unhobbled and burdened and mounted they kicked up their heels, set up a horrid bray, and tore off into the moonlight, and toward the waiting horsemen. That was the amazing sight which broke upon the eyes of

all—Isaac and the two boys on donkeys, with Kadoor after them for company, charging down with all their might upon the advance guard of Moors. The boys shouted and screamed with laughter (knowing nothing of their danger), while Isaac yelled and Kadoor hallooed. It excited the Dads men to such a degree that, in spite of their usual reluctance to spend precious powder, shot after shot rang out.

At this unexpected development of affairs the Moorish horsemen turned rein and galloped off; for to any military experience it was plain that if the Dads men meant to fight, they occupied such a position as could only be effectually stormed in the daytime. Thus it was that Isaac and his donkeys defeated the Moors and made them run. When the horses galloped off, it was possible to bring the donkeys to reason; and Isaac and the boys and Kadoor returned in triumph.

“S’welp me!” exclaimed Isaac, “we done it after all. Gosh! didn’t they ’ook it! I don’t think much o’ *them* for sodgers.”

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“Don't be a fool!” said Jim. “It has turned out lucky for us. And now that it has, we had better be off, while we have the chance.”

CHAPTER XXI

“BLUE NECKLACE AND CROSS”

So Jim and his company set forth toward the White City, with all their guns, and in better case than they had hoped to be, and they were accompanied by the blessings of the men of Dads, and hopes of meeting again if they survived encounter with the Djins, or the Veiled Men, or with both.

As the great white masses of tumbled building rose before them, fear and awe deepened even on those who had no superstitions about Djins. The boys slept in their places on the donkey's backs, but the girls trembled, and the men glanced furtively and fearfully on this side and on that to pierce the deep shadows which seemed to live and breathe.

The Lalla Samana alone seemed at ease; and the farther they advanced, the more confident and ecstatic she seemed to grow. But not a word was spoken by anyone till they

came to the central space, to which all the ways appeared to lead. Arrived there, they halted by the broken pillar, where the three men had halted some little time before, and where they had been overcome, as witnessed by the Shereef of Dads. They looked around them, but there was no sign either of living creature, or of Djin, or of ghost.

All was silent, white, and awful; for these monuments of the mighty dead seemed to gaze on them as mean and puny intruders.

“From here,” murmured the Lalla Samana, “the directions to find the treasure begin, do they not, Sidi Jim?”

“Yes,” answered Jim. “But we must find our friends first, or find out what has become of them, must we not?”

“To seek the treasure,” said the Lalla, “will be to find our friends, for where the treasure is there are they—be sure.”

She seemed to be so confident in her opinion that Jim yielded, and named the first point of the directions from the market-place, “*look due east.*”

He turned and faced in that direction, as correctly as he knew how without a compass.

“‘*Measure,*’” he continued, “‘*five hundred paces of a man of five foot ten.*’ I am about that height,” said he, and he set off pacing the distance, while the rest stood and watched him with the greatest interest, but with an occasional timorous look around.

Jim carried his rifle ready loaded, and the Lalla followed in his steps, bearing the long Arab gun of Kadoor.

The five hundred paces brought Jim to the verge of the great market-place, and within a yard or two of the pillared ruins of a great building. The Lalla called and beckoned the whole company forward.

“‘*Turn at right angles and count three hundred more,*’” said Jim, now much excited with having begun the prescribed movements. “But which way?” he exclaimed.

“Try both ways,” said the Lalla.

He first turned to the North, and saw that very few paces that way would bring him against the wall of the great building.

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“It must be the other way,” said the Lalla, “it is plain.”

So Jim measured off the three hundred paces to the South, and found himself at the head of a street or way leading out of the market-place.

“‘*Face the moon,*’” said he, quoting again from the directions, and then he turned and looked at the Lalla. The moon was not to be seen; it was hid behind a great mass of building whose bulk and outlines were thrown up by its radiance. But on the top of a high tower at either end of the building was a structure like a canoe with the ends very much tilted, or indeed like a crescent moon lying on its back.

“That,” said Jim in triumph, “must be what is meant; “‘*face the moon*’ must mean face that.” Then, setting himself that way, he said, quoting, “‘*Walk four hundred paces,*’” and began to step them out, the whole company following with more and more excitement.

Jim had not hoped that the four hundred paces would bring him to the great building

with the horned moons, but he had not expected when the distance was stepped to find himself in the middle of the highway.

“I aimed,” said he, “for the middle of the building. I should aim, perhaps, for one of the moons.”

He returned to the point whence he had measured his four hundred paces, and fixing his eye on the crescent on the right-hand side he marched forward again. The four hundredth pace brought him close to a broken wall, not plump, but sideways. There a glance of the eye told him there were a gaping hollow and a descent. He went to it, and looked within and saw steps. He recalled the words of the directions: “‘*You come to a flight of ten steps with a door at the bottom.*’” Without hesitation Jim began to descend (and the Lalla Samana and the girls followed him), counting the steps as he went.

He went slowly, for the steps, like all else about the White City, were on a gigantic scale: they were deep and long, and tolerably worn in the middle. He counted ten, and

being then in pitch darkness he struck a match. The light showed they were at the bottom of the flight of steps, and at the beginning of a low tunnel, which was blocked a few yards beyond them by a heavy door.

They moved forward, their feet falling soundless in the deep dust.

“Wait a moment!” exclaimed Jim. He stopped and struck another match; he stooped and explored the dusty passage before him with the light. “There are no footsteps before us,” said he. “Therefore our friends, wherever they are, have not come this way.”

“That is plain, Sidi Jim!” said the Lalla Samana, after having stooped and explored for herself. “But behold the door! See!”

And she started forward, letting the expiring match gleam for a moment on a glistening design over the door of blue pebbles or jewels.

“‘*Over the door,*’” said he, quoting the last sentence of the directions, “‘*is a blue necklace and cross.*’” He lit another match and again considered the design. “It is a well-known

symbol," said he, "but I forget of what: a circle and cross. But why is a *circle* and *cross* called a *necklace and cross*?"

"It may be," said the Lalla, "that he who wrote the directions knew of this," and she indicated the blue tattooing about her neck. "Since ages unknown our tribe of Ait Yalla has been guardians of this place, and one of our women has ever worn the symbol thus. It may be, Sidi, that he who wrote what you know was acquainted with my tribe and with the necklace woman of that time. I—even I—am the necklace woman of to-day!" she exclaimed, and seemed to swell with pride and triumph as she spoke. "I, even I, am the one, the only person, that possesses the secret of the Treasure! Besides me, there is no other, and without me no man can find or lay hands on the Treasure."

"Oh!" said Jim, in matter-of-fact English, "I didn't know that."

The match went out, and he lit still another to survey the door. It was very strong and very old, of walnut-wood, clamped and hinged

with bronze, not with iron, which suggested even to the ignorant Jim the likelihood of a very remote date for its origin.

Jim stepped forward and pushed at the door. But it would not yield; nor was there any sign of latch, or bolt, or lock.

“I may not open the door,” said the Lalla; “none but a Roumi may, for none but a Roumi and a N’zareny * may take the cross in his hand.”

“Take the cross into his hand?” exclaimed Jim, looking at the symbol over the door.

“Put forth thy hand,” said the Lalla, “and try.”

Jim raised himself on tiptoe, felt the cross, and found that it was in one piece, loosely embedded in the huge lintel. With a little effort he found he could take it out.

“Take it in thy hand and pull,” said the Lalla.

He took it in his hand and pulled, and a chain ran through a hole at the bottom of the circle which remained fixed.

* A Nazarene, or Christian.

"Pull more strongly," said the Lalla.

He pulled harder and gave a jerk, and from the sound it seemed that a heavy latch flew up on the other side of the door. It was a simple contrivance, but effectual enough for keeping the door fast closed.

The Lalla pushed the door open.

"Now," said she, "put back the cross in its place."

And he did so; and then they gazed into the blackness of darkness to which the open door admitted.

"We had better get a lantern," said Jim, "before we go farther."

The Lalla Samana agreed with him, and he returned along the tunnel and up the steps, the two girls and Kadoor (who had been drawn down the steps also by an overmastering curiosity) following after Jim, for fear of the darkness, and the Lalla Samana alone remained by the open door. When they reached the top of the steps they received a double shock of astonishment and dread. Isaac Goldstein and the two boys with the animals and the baggage

had been left at the top of the steps. Now there was no trace of them!

What had become of them? Had they been captured by the lurking Veiled Men—silently, as the Shereef had suspected the capture of the doctor and Sandy to have been effected? Or had Isaac turned traitor again, and gone off to the Basha, taking the boys and the beasts with him?

For there were the Basha's people plainly (and that was the second astonishing and dreadful thing) riding their horses into the great deserted market-place, where soldiers and slaves were already lighting fires and preparing a bivouac for the night. Kadoor ran back down the steps and into the tunnel to call the Lalla Samana to come and see.

“The insolent Arby!” she exclaimed, when she arrived and saw. “How dare the Basha—the son of a creeping slave—camp his creatures in the midst of the Sacred City? Yet ruin will overtake him,” she exclaimed, with a proud and angry look. “But,” she added, turning to Jim, “we must return. There is no time

to be lost in seeking for Isaac and the beasts.”

“That would be useless and dangerous, of course,” said Jim, “with the Basha’s people at hand. But what can we do without a lantern or a candle?”

“We must go forward even in the darkness,” exclaimed the Lalla with energy. “In a little while the Basha also may find this entrance.”

So they all passed down the steps again and along the tunnel to the open door, which the Lalla closed and latched as it had been before. They fumbled and felt their way on into the thick darkness, and at intervals Jim struck another and another match, as much to relieve the eyes upon which the heavy darkness weighed as to see where they were. Gradually the circular tunnel opened out, trumpet-fashion, the floor sinking, the roof rising, and the sides receding, and the air struck on them chill and damp, as if from the presence of water. And gradually, as the tunnel wound downward, strange sounds broke booming on their ear like a sad chorus in chanting—sounds

which made them shiver with dread, for by what strange creatures could they be uttered?

And still, as they felt their way onward, turning with the winding tunnel, a light shone along the tunnel roof, and was reflected down upon a smooth, shimmering black surface of water. Suddenly the light shone out above them, and they saw that there the tunnel ended at its widest, and that further progress was stopped by the stone brink of a great pool, into which they might have stepped, and where they might have been drowned, but for the light above. The Pool seemed almost circular, and a hundred yards or so across; its waters also were fresh to the taste, so that there must be somewhere an in-flow and an out-flow.

They raised their eyes to the light (which seemed to astonish the Lalla Samana as much as the others), just as a muffled burst of chanting rang and echoed down upon them.

“O Giver of good to all! O Creator! Protector of the oppressed! Allah-il-Allah! Allah-hu!”

That, in the Arabic of the Koran, was the chant they heard; and then, to their amazement and dread, they saw, fifty or sixty feet above the Pool, flooded with light, some dozen Veiled Men, who led the doctor, Sandy, and the Hadj in their midst.

The strange appearance of the Veiled Men struck chilly to their blood. They were tall and wonderfully thin, with a white robe of cotton or linen covering them from neck to heel, while strange yellow things hung about their necks, before and behind, so that they seemed to wear breast-plates and back-pieces of brass. But the strange thing in their appearance was the veiling, which evidently consisted of two pieces, the one hanging from beneath the eyes over all the lower part of the face, and the other brought over the head and projecting like a curtain or hood, so that nothing was seen but the eyes gleaming from under.

It was the veil evidently which gave the muffled effect to the chanting.

And still, as they chanted, they wheeled to

the brink of the abyss, with the doctor and Sandy and the Hadj in front.

The chanting of the Veiled Men ceased, and then echoed down the mingled voices of Sandy and the doctor. It came with a shock upon Jim to recognize what they thus chanted in Arabic. What was it?

“Our Father, which art in Heaven! Hallowed be Thy name,” and so on.

And they stood on the brink, with their hands clasped or bound before them—it was impossible to say which. But Jim guessed that their prayer meant, they were making a final protest of being Christians.

CHAPTER XXII

THE POOL OF TERRORS

SEEING them thus, Jim called up out of the darkness in English:

“Hello! Sandy Peebles and Brother Nat. Lie down quick, and I’ll shoot!” Then, noting by the light that filtered down that Kador was pointing his gun to shoot also, he restrained him, saying, “One at a time, Kador. We don’t want to damage more men than we can help. To frighten them may be enough.”

At once apprehending the unexpected warning, Sandy and the doctor threw themselves down on the brink of the abyss, dragging the old Hadj to the floor with them.

Jim fired, and the explosion reverberated from the roof and sides of the great cave.

It was a shot-gun he carried; and though the range was short, the shot evidently scattered wonderfully, for two or three of the

Veiled Men fell (though probably only disabled), and all drew back. All drew back; but suddenly one tall fellow dashed forward again, clearly to push the prostrate strangers over. He first made at Sandy. But Sandy, handfast though he evidently was, made a tough struggle of it.

"Ah!" cried out the Lalla Samana, pointing the long gun she carried. "Traacherous destroyers of my people. If I could only shoot you all."

"Hold!" cried Jim, laying a hand on her. "Do not shoot. You know not which you may hit."

The two struggled together on the brink of the abyss. None of the other Veiled Men came forward either to hinder or to aid. And just as the doctor reached out to grab at Sandy's assailant, both suddenly rose almost erect, Sandy with his legs twisted about the Veiled Man.

"By Jingo!" he roared in English, "if I go, you go too."

And they went. They toppled together

over the sheer abyss, and fell into the darkness.

“Look out,” cried the doctor in English. “Lend a hand if you can. They say there’s some horrible monster in the Pool! An alligator, perhaps! Bring lights, you villains!” he called in Arabic to the Veiled Men, who had retired.

Whether because of his demand or not, they came eagerly forward with their spears in their hands and with torches, and a loud cry of astonishment and dismay, for the Veiled Man who had fallen seemed to be a leader among them.

Then, in the smoky glare of the torches, a terrible scene became visible. The Veiled Man, having detached himself from Sandy, was swimming to the side. Sandy—horrible to tell!—was caught by some powerful grip about the waist and chest.

“Heavens!” he cried, in the sudden shock of horror, “what is this?”

He struggled and writhed, and then, before the astonished and horrified gaze of everyone,

he was raised clear out of the water by a pair of long feelers, like those of a giant octopus—the one being gripped about his middle, and the other about his chest, toward the neck. Their appearance was the more sickeningly horrible that they were white and smooth like human flesh, and about the thickness of a strong man's arm; and what yet added to the horror of the scene was that the creature to which these feelers or arms belonged was silent and invisible. The amazement of the company was at first so great that no one either stirred or spoke—all seemed stiffened with horror. The first to break the spell was the Lalla Samana.

“Ah! accursed slayer of my people!” she cried. “Dost thou hope to escape because the guardian of the Pool spares thee?”

Having said which, she pointed her gun, and fired at the Veiled Man, who was clambering out of the water upon a narrow ledge that ran round the side of the Pool. He fell without a cry, and lay still, half in the water and half out.

With a mere side thought of wonder that the creature of the Pool should have left the Veiled Man alone and seized upon Sandy Peebles, Jim rapidly threw off his upper garments that encumbered him, and his turban, and drawing his long, Moorish dagger plunged into the water to Sandy's aid. His action was so quick that none of his company seemed aware of what he was going to do till he had done it. Susannah flew forward and tried to catch hold of him, but he was gone.

"Ah! Sidi Jim!" she cried, wringing her hands on the stone brink of the Pool. "What shall I do? You will die! The beast will kill you—and kill us all!"

"Ah! Kadoor also! Kadoor!" cried Zara; for Kadoor plunged also in the Pool, knife in hand, with a shout of "Allah!"

At the same instant as Jim dived and made to Sandy's aid, the Veiled Men above noted that their comrade below had been shot, and they set up a loud and angry roar, and make at the doctor and the Hadj to thrust them over also.

"We may as well leap, Hadj," cried the doctor, "as be thrust over with spears!"

"Alas!" said the Hadj. "I have no skill in swimming, even if the Monster of Gehennam spare me."

By some sleight of movement, when one of the Veiled Men thrust at him with his spear, the doctor contrived to cut on the sharp spear-head the thong with which his hands were bound; then calling "Come, Hadj!" he dived the fifty feet or so into the Pool. The Hadj, being thrust at and pushed by the spears, had no help but leap also.

"Allah, the All Merciful, preserve me!" he cried, and leaped.

There were thus in all five men struggling in the Pool, while the women looked on with horror from the brink, and the Veiled Men, with flaring torches held forth, looked down from above. It was an amazing and terrible contest which went on, but it was wellnigh impossible to make out its progress. The first thing Jim did was to cut the bond that bound Sandy's hands: that was plain. But what fol-

lowed was not. More and more of the terrible and deadly white arms of the Monster flourished out of the water and gleamed in the light from above, and more and more bodies of writhing and struggling men seemed inextricably mixed in the embrace of the horrible arms. Fierce, deadly cries were uttered, the water was lashed into wild waves, and it was evident that the knives and daggers of the strugglers were being freely used, for the waves that washed up over the stone brink were more and more colored with blood.

It seemed that this terrible strife came suddenly to an end after a few seconds.

The awful white arms, gashed and bleeding, were withdrawn, and the exhausted men swam to the brink of the Pool, the doctor bringing the Hadj to shore with him. But the poor old man was spent and wounded.

He seemed to be suffering more from contact with the Monster than from his immersion in the water.

He was not in a drowning condition, but he labored in his breathing and complained of

intolerable pain in the chest, so that the doctor thought some of his ribs must have been broken by the strangling embrace of one of the terrible white arms.

“I die, Sidi Tabeeb!” he murmured. “There is no issue but death. But I die at peace, for Allah has revealed to me, after a long and stormy life, that all men are brothers who believe in God—all save these, who are abandoned and accursed of God! Say to me, Sidi Tabeeb, the prayer you said on the brink above.”

The doctor slowly went through the Lord’s Prayer in Arabic.

“Wallahy!” cried the Lalla Samana, flinging her arms aloft. “All my father’s people are gone. I—even I—only am left of them, and this my daughter.”

Her daughter wept also, and cried: “Oh! why have we come into this horrible place?” And Susannah wept also, although Jim was out of the water again, safe and strong; but the rest were too much troubled and distracted to utter a sound. They carried the Hadj

aside, and set him propped against the wall, as if waiting to be waked at the Great Summons.

“Dead!” said the doctor, after a final examination. “There is no doubt of it. Dead!”

And then they sat down in a very chastened and saddened frame. They sat thus for some time in complete darkness, for the Veiled Men above had gone away with their torches. They sat thus, when there rolled down the winding tunnel behind them a faint noise which quickly grew to a rumble—till at length it was as that of a great vehicle.

“Hark!” cried the Lalla Samana, springing to her feet. “It must be the sound of the coming of the people of the Basha! They must have found the door—how, I know not.”

“Isaac,” suggested Jim, and said no more.

“Is Isaac not with you?” said the doctor.

“No,” was Jim’s answer, and that was all. Everyone was too utterly wretched and broken to speak or act.

“Arouse ye, sirs!” exclaimed the Lalla. “’Tis I will guide you into safety, and to what

ye have come to seek—the treasure which only the Roumin may touch.”

“What escape is there?” cried Sandy. “The Basha behind! The Pool with that horrible Monster before! By Heavens! I never was in such a trap! And, look, here come the stinking Veiled scoundrels again.”

“Why do you call them ‘stinking’?” asked Jim.

“Because they are,” answered Sandy.

Their attention was taken by the re-appearance of the Veiled Men, with torches, above them.

It was soon apparent what they had come for by the descent of a shower of stones.

“Good Heavens!” cried Sandy, “the position is improving!”

“Allah!” cried Kadoor. And then, as if half-mad with the excitement either of terror or of desperation, he began chanting one of his Arabic songs in his sweet and extraordinary tenor.

“This way!” called the Lalla Samana. “This is the way to safety. Follow me!”

No one could be sure that she knew a true way to safety, in spite of her protestations. But, after all, the way she took was the only way that could be taken, if they were not to return through the tunnel. She led along the narrow slippery ledge that skirted the Pool some inches above its surface; and that way had this advantage also—that because of the curving out of the roof over them, it was difficult for the stone-throwers to hit them there.

The Lalla passed along the ledge to show the way; but before she came to where the Veiled Man lay upon the ledge, half in the water, her daughter, who followed some steps behind her, screamed, and fled back.

“Oh! the white arm,” she cried, “of the Water-beast.”

“Monster! Djin!” cried the Lalla Samana herself. “Is not that carrion enough for thy greed?”

She stooped and pushed the dead man farther into the water; but the horrible white arm passed the dead body over, and reached out at her as she held herself flat to the wall

and clung to a projecting knob of rock. It reached to her and sought to lay hold, and she gazed in fascination, wellnigh helpless. But Kadoor leaped forward with his long, heavy Moorish sabre drawn.

A slippery bound or two brought him up against the Lalla and her assailant.

With fierce shouts he hewed with his sabre at the great white feeler.

Another arm was thrust from the water at him.

"Forward, Lalla!" he cried, and hacked at both arms, shouting, "Enemy of man! Monster and Beast of obscenity! Djin of hoary antiquity!"

"By Jingo!" cried Sandy Peebles, "the noise is growing in the tunnel! We had better all make a rush for it! Now, my Lalla," said he to the frightened Zara, "let me carry you. Trust to me! Jim, you can carry Susannah."

Thus, with their big Moorish knives out, they went forward to the dangerous passage of the slippery ledge, Sandy carrying Zara,

and Jim carrying Susannah, and the doctor following alone. Kadoor having engaged the Monster, the Lalla Samana had leaped beyond danger. Kadoor in his rage took up in his arms the body of the Veiled Man and cast it into the Pool.

“Fit food for thee, Monster!” he cried. And then, “Pah! it stinketh indeed!”

In any case the Monster would have none of it, but thrust out his long arms, now terribly gashed and bleeding freely, at the company daring the passage of the ledge. Gripping tightly by the projecting knobs of rock (while the girls clasped their necks), and striking hard with their daggers at every arm that caught at them, Sandy and Jim, and after them the doctor, carrying the guns slung at his back, passed steadily on.

The monster's movements were far feebler than when they struggled in the water, and doubtless also he was much embarrassed by the great stones which still rained from above. At any rate, when they had fought the passage up to a certain point, the great white

bleeding arms were withdrawn again into the water, and the exhausted adventurers, following the lead of Lalla Samana, slipped behind a projecting ledge of rock, and found themselves in a narrow passage, close and dark.

Forward into the darkness they steadily pushed, one holding the hand and treading on the heels of another. The passage wound round to the left—or, at least, in their progress through the thick darkness it seemed to do so—and then it opened suddenly out, and they found themselves in a lofty, warm chamber, with some light filtering down from far above.

“This is the Sacred Place!” said the Lalla. “So I judge from the secrets entrusted to me long ago. We may rest here till dawn, secure in the company of the Roumin—the Sidi Ta-beeb, the Sidi Sandy, and the Sidi Jim. Here there is Peace!”

They threw themselves down in the thick dust, and being all utterly exhausted, they were soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WONDROUS CRESCENT

WHEN they woke a filtered and weakened daylight was pouring down into the chamber, as from a very high and very wide chimney. Indeed, it seemed as if the chamber was not a chamber at all, but part of a tunnel, which extended this way and that into darkness.

The little company looked about upon each other; and it was touching to note that, while Kadoor himself was very lightly clothed, his *haidus*, or cloak of goat's-hair, was found covering the doctor. He pretended that he could not guess how that had come about, but, since it had happened, it was well, for the Sidi Tabeeb was not a strong man. His other outer garment was found covering Zara, and Jim's cloak was found covering Susannah.

"I am terribly thirsty and hungry," said Jim.

"I don't suppose there's anything handy," said Sandy Peebles, "unless we could find our way to where the Veiled Men put up."

"God forbid!" said the doctor. "I don't want to see any more of them—even if we were starving. They are too horrible."

"Horrible! Is that the word?" said Jim.

"Quite the word! By Jingo!" said Sandy.

"Tell us about them," said Jim.

"Well," said Sandy, "there's not much to tell, my boy—except that they're the most stinking, depraved ruffians it has ever been my privilege to meet; and I think your learned and gentle brother agrees with me."

"I do," said the doctor, "most fervently."

"You may suppose, my lad," continued Sandy, "that they did not overwhelm us with kindness. They were not even polite. They led us off on a string with our necks haltered together, like three beasts, and they prodded us up now and then with their iron spears. They took us to their encampment, somewhere among the ruins, and made us wait while they ate their supper."

“Didn’t they offer you any?” asked Jim.

“We couldn’t have eaten it if they had offered,” answered his brother.

“Why?” asked Jim.

“If you had been there, you’d have understood why,” said Sandy. “And, oh!—to see them eat! It looked—’pon my word!—like revived corpses feeding! They didn’t take off their veils, but thrust the food under them. It was ghastly!—horrible!

“When they had done eating, they and their friends and chiefs led us here. They spoke; but we couldn’t—even the Hadj couldn’t—understand a word; and evidently they couldn’t understand a word of ours. Well—and then you saw the rest. Suppose they had kept us prisoners for days,” mused Sandy. “I think quick death would have been preferable to their company. Wouldn’t it?” he appealed to the doctor. “What?”

“I think it would,” answered the doctor, with a shudder.

“Why?” again demanded Jim.

“They smelt so horribly!” answered Sandy.

“Oh, heavens! how they smelt! Diseased garbage: that’s what it was like! You’ve been in the dissecting-room, young man, with a bad case? Well, imagine several hundred bad cases round about you!—touching you!—handling you!”

“Did you notice,” asked the doctor of his brother, “that the Creature of the Pool would have nothing to do with the one that went down with Sandy?”

“I did, and I wondered,” answered Jim.

“Well,” said his brother, “I have my own suspicion of the reason of that, and of their sickening smell too. But it’s too horrible to name.” Then to Jim, who was exceedingly curious, he added, “It may become evident before we are done with them and out of this.”

When the Sidis ceased their talk, the Lalla Samana rose from her place with the girls and came to them.

“Arise, Sidis,” said she. “The Treasure must not be inquired for till high noon, when you shall see the Lalla of the place. But meanwhile there may be much to do. Therefore,

eat a morsel and come with me. Here are three cakes of dried dates," which she broke and handed round, reserving one for herself and the girls.

They were dry indeed, for they broke like biscuit, but in the mouth they softened.

"I *should* like a drink of water!" exclaimed Jim. "Isn't it possible to go back and get some from the Pool?"

"Do you remember," asked Sandy, "what was in the Pool? Do you—a doctor!—want to drink typhoid germs? You must wait, my boy."

"Let the Sidi Jim come with me," said the Lalla, "and he will see that the Pool is now a place of loathing—the Monster will have done his work."

All remembered the sounds of the approach down the tunnel of the Basha's people, and they thought with a shudder of what might be seen.

"That poor idiot Isaac may have been among them!" said the doctor.

Jim followed the Lalla without a word into

the narrow passage by which they had come from the Pool, and which (she declared) no one knew of but herself. In a few seconds they had passed the knife-edged wall of rock and were upon the margin of the Pool.

The stench that assailed their nostrils was the first thing that gave intimation of what had happened. Then in the daylight that filtered down through the opening where they had seen the Veiled Men, they saw a sight which made them quickly turn and flee. The Creature of the Pool had been glutted for once, if never before.

The swollen bodies of a dozen negroes floated on the water. They had been driven down the tunnel by the Basha—there could hardly be a doubt, like terror-stricken beasts, driven with less resistance than beasts, for both mind and body must have been utterly unstrung by their superstitious horror of Djins and devils.

“Oh! no,” cried Jim. “Not a drop of that!” and swiftly slipped back to his comrades with the Lalla.

“Well, my boy?” asked Sandy Peebles.

“Don’t ask me about it at present!” said Jim. “It’s too horrible!”

“Now, Sidis,” said the Lalla, “follow me.”

She led and they followed under the funnel, or chimney, or shaft (call it which you will) down which the light flowed. Looking up they saw, sticking out all the height up, short projections.

They examined them close at hand, at the bottom of the shaft, and saw plainly what they were and what they were meant for. They were narrow steps of undressed stone, built into the wall, and sticking out from it a little more than a foot, and each one set about a foot above and a foot in advance of the one below. Their purpose was made plain by the Lalla proceeding to grasp and mount them, as if they were the rungs of a ladder.

“By Jingo!” cried Sandy. “Must we climb up here? Will they bear?”

“I would guess,” said the doctor, “that in the dry air of the desert, they might last

longer and remain sounder than iron. They are of hard wood."

"Well, I suppose we must risk it," said Sandy. "I wouldn't disobey the Lalla," he added in English, "for anything when she's in her Sibylline mood."

"Oh! I cannot climb!" cried Zara, viewing the awkward winding ascent of two hundred feet or so.

"Nor I!" cried Susannah.

"Then, my children," said the Lalla, "you must wait here till we return. Kadoor will remain with you." And Kadoor obediently did.

The Englishmen found the climb awkward, not being sailors; but no more awkward nor more dizzy a performance than climbing many an old English tower on narrow stone steps, with no protection on the outer edge, and never a thing for the hands to grip.

When they reached the top after the Lalla, they found themselves on a battlemented and loop-holed platform, from the centre of which on a pedestal rose one of the stone crescents which they had remarked from below.

“Allah have mercy!” exclaimed the Lalla, on looking through one of the embrasures. “We are besieged! The soldiers of the Basha are all around us!”

The Englishmen looked through the openings, and saw far below, like toy soldiers, the Moors riding to and fro, besetting, it was evident, all the approaches to the temple.

The light of the newly-risen sun made the gigantic ruins of the White City of a dazzling brilliance; and the furious riding of Moorish cavaliers, with their gaily-coloured mantles and saddle-cloths—green and yellow and blue and rose—streaming like banners, gave such an appearance of life and gaiety as the strange city could not have known for many a year.

The Moors were confidently besetting the place; but our friends from their lofty lookout could see dangers that the Moors did not reckon of. Remote among the ruins to the east—all stood forth very plainly in the dry, clear air—was a crowd of white figures—a crowd of a hundred or two moving busily about, driving

beasts into enclosures among the ruins, and striking some poor, mean-looking tents. They were, doubtless, the Veiled Men.

Away, remote on the other side, toward the west, was another crowd of little figures, marching with animals. They were, doubtless, the men of Dads leaving their night encampment, and they were marching in all haste toward a rich valley some two or three miles beyond, where was a fortified village, like Dads, and where sparkled streams of water and shone the bushy green tops of innumerable and close-set date-palms.

“It is the hour that has been written against my name!” suddenly cried the Lalla, who had eagerly noted all these things. “Now shall my people be summoned to vengeance! I shall summon them. I alone have the secret. And I am here ready!” To the three Englishmen regarding her in wonder she appeared like one inspired. She rushed to the pedestal that supported the stone crescent and applied her mouth to a hole no larger than would admit a pigeon’s egg. She blew and blew

again with all her might, and then came a faint sound as of a horn.

“Ah! Sidis,” she cried in distress, “this should sound far over miles of country. Once in my youth I heard it summon the tribes to war. But I am old, Sidis, and am not strong.”

“Let me do it,” cried Sandy. Then to his fellows: “I know the kind of thing it is. Like King Alfred’s Horn in the Vale of the White Horse. I’ve sounded that, and I dare say I can sound this.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE AMAZING TREASURE

HE took a good breath and applied his mouth, and it seemed as if the whole crescent were vibrating and in labor with sound, and then there flowed out upon the air, as if from either tip of the crescent, a long low note of exceeding volume, like the sound of the fog-horn of a great ship at sea.

The effect was instantaneous and amazing. The Moorish soldiers abruptly ceased their riding to and fro, and the slaves and camp-followers paused in their menial duties. The Veiled Men (unseen by the Moors) away to the east stopped all their movements and stood like pillars of salt. And still, as the note sounded and resounded, they remained silent and motionless, and gazed all around and up in the air, and palpably wondered.

And as the note yet flowed vibrating forth

on the air, it came to the ears of the Dadsmen out to the west, and averted their progress like a word of military command.

It flowed on and hovered over the rich valley of Ait Yalla, and brought men and women and children running up upon the roofs and towers of the village.

“It is enough, Sidi,” said the Lalla, laying her hand on Sandy’s arm. “You are he that should come. You sound it mightily as, methinks, it can never have been sounded before.”

When the sound ceased people moved again, below among the Moors and beyond among the Veiled Men, but with a kind of bewilderment and awe, as not conceiving what the loud and lofty sound might mean, and yet being afraid of it.

But it seemed plain, from their superlative activity, that the Dadsmen and their kinsmen of the valley knew the meaning of the sound, and hailed it with superstitious joy. The main body of the Dadsmen halted, and sent flying on to the village a couple of fleet mes-

sengers, and the village itself became suddenly as active as a hive of bees.

“It is well,” said the Lalla, in the greatest excitement. “The sound has gone forth. In a little while ye will see my people come to battle. And the Basha and his people will be swept away, and the Abandoned of God—the Veiled Men, too!”

In a little while the effect upon those below of the strange and sustained note of alarm had seemed to have worn off, and they resumed their arrangements for assailing the Temple, in spite of the superstitious dread of it as an abode of Djins, which most of the Moors must have entertained. The cavaliers rode forth again, and defied the Djins (and apparently all creation) on their leaping steeds, and brave-streaming apparel, and the foot-soldiers, firing their guns to encourage each other, came more near.

If they chose they might in a few minutes rush the place, and our friends had no superstition that they would be flung back by of-

fended and defending Djins. It might very well be that the very tower on which they ten were might be seized.

“I’ll give the horn another blow! Hanged if I don’t!” said Sandy Peebles.

He went to the pedestal and sounded again the same prolonged warning and appealing note as before.

The effect was immediate. As if they had felt it vibrate immediately over their heads, the Moors looked up in terror, with their hands to their turbans, and fled back from the neighborhood of the Temple. The Veiled Men, as if they also had fixed the sound, began to troop warily in, as if to discover what and where the strange sound exactly was. And the Dadsmen and their friends made greater haste in their preparations for a contest.

In something more than an hour the Dadsmen and their friends from the village were among the ruins of the White City, and throwing forward scouts among the fallen blocks of masonry.

As it happened, they first collided with their

detested enemies, the Abandoned of God, the Veiled Men.

A shot or two rang out. Puffs of smoke went up into the clear air, and after them rose the sound of shots; and the Veiled Men, who appeared to possess no firearms, retired. But the sound of the firing and the sight of smoke attracted the attention of the Moors, who rode and marched, wheeling and returning, and spreading themselves out in skirmishing order, on in the direction of the shots.

Presently they drew the fire of the lurking Dadsmen and their friends from the valley, and they retired to tempt them forth. But the Berbers, who were no horsemen, stuck to their secure places among the tumbled ruins, where horsemen could not charge them.

The sound of firing brought Kadoor up from below, in a condition of extraordinary excitement, and with all the guns on his back. What had occurred was explained to him, and he saw for himself how things were at the moment.

He was eager that they should join in the

fray, either from their lofty security or by descending and making a diversion in the rear of the Moors. He could not understand the Englishmen's civilized objection to shooting men in a quarrel which was not theirs; it appeared to him that a fight was a fight, and should be "chipped into" whenever possible, though it were only for the fun of the thing. He declared he would go down by himself and find a way out to join his friends and kinsmen. But the Lalla forbade that.

"Having come with the English Sidis and eaten their bread, O Kadoor!" said she, "thou art bound to remain with them so long as they may need thee. There will be much to do here in a little while."

After a period of desultory firing (in which much powder was wasted, which the Berbers at least could ill afford), those holding to the ruins arose and made a rush upon the advance line of Moors and drove them back. They pushed on their advantage, and flung themselves upon the main body of their hereditary enemy with sabre and dagger.

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The Moors were driven like sheep down that wide street which led from the central market-place to the Temple. The Moors would have been beaten or driven to bay against the Temple walls had not a diversion occurred. Kadoor's quick eye noted it first.

"Ah! the Accursed, the Abandoned Ones! Look, my brothers—look!" he cried.

If those below heard the cry at all through their own yells they must have been confirmed in their belief that the Temple, at least, was a place of fiendish activity and fiendish noise.

The Abandoned of God, the Veiled Men, who, after their first repulse by the Berbers, had been working forward among the tumbled walls, swept through one end of the market-place and flung themselves with their long spears upon the men of Dads and of the valley; and they must have looked very fearsome attacking thus in their veiled condition, no feature of them being visible but their savage, gleaming eyes.

At any rate, the onset of their spears was

more than the men of Dads and of the valley could endure. They broke and fled in among the ruins to the left of the Moors, and to the left also of those aloft on the Temple tower. There they held fast, and used their guns again upon the Veiled Men—of whose attack upon the Berbers the Moors lost much of the advantage, because of their stockish amazement at their sudden and utterly unexpected appearance.

It was a very small battle, if you think of the numbers engaged, but the interests at stake, and the feelings involved—the hopes and fears, the hatred and the vengeance—were as great as if tens of thousands were fighting.

Recovering from their surprise, the Men of the Village (who were the survivors of the Ait Yalla) left their friends from Dads, being infuriated by the appearance of the destroyers of their clan, and burst out again with incredible dash upon the Veiled Men.

“Yalla!” they yelled. “Forward, Ait Yalla! Death to the Accursed Ones!—the

destroyers of our people! Vengeance on the Veiled!"

Then the excitement of the Lalla Samana was most intense. She clung to the battlement and leaned over, and cried:

"Kill! Slay! Spare not, my children, my brothers! Be brave! Oh! be brave! Remember the death they caused your fathers and brothers to die, your wives and your children! Kill the Accursed Ones! Leave not one alive of such horrors!"

The fury of the attack made the Veiled Men give way, and stimulated by their example the men of Dads, having found a way through the ruins, fell upon the left flank of the Moors and drove it in, and so almost got between the Moors and the Temple. The Moorish horsemen formed up to charge the men of Dads, who were yelling:

"Down with the Arbies! Death to the riders of horses!"

The excitement of those on the top of the tower was now grown so great that they could no longer refrain from action.

"If we don't chip in now," said Sandy to his comrades, "the Moors will have the best of it."

"Look at that big nigger on the horse," cried Jim, "making up to our old Shereef."

Sandy had seen the same, and as Jim spoke he picked the negro off. As the negro toppled from his horse the guns of the others on the tower rang out—once and again. The Moors, doubtful whence this interruption proceeded, looked up and around, falling back in disorder.

"One touch more of terror and they're done for!" exclaimed Sandy, and dropping his rifle he dashed to the pedestal and blew the gigantic stone horn for the third time.

The effect was complete. The Moors turned tail and fled down the open street to the market place, pursued hot-foot by the men of Dads, while the Veiled Men fled across the end of the market-place, in among the further ruins, pursued by the men of the Ait Yalla.

Those on the tower watched the pursuit for some little while, and then the Lalla Samana,

looking up at the sun, announced it was time to go down. She went first. Some twenty or thirty feet from the bottom she stopped, to the surprise of those following her, and pushing a low wooden door (which they had not remarked in going up, perhaps because it was of the same colour as the stone) she stepped within. Each one as he came down she drew in at that door—all except Kadoor.

“I alone and the Roumin, O Kadoor,” said she to him, “may enter this door. Descend thou to the girls, or remain here till we return.”

Kadoor descended.

The Englishmen followed the Lalla along a curving passage and into a high, domed chamber, which was lighted solely by a round hole of no great size at the apex of the dome. The Lalla stood aside at the entrance of the chamber and beckoned the three Englishmen to pass her.

“Only the Roumin,” she murmured, as if in awe, “may enter here. Behold the Lalla! —the Lady of the White City!”

They entered, and paused in astonishment. In the centre of the chamber was an effigy in wax or in painted wood of an ancient oracular idol—a female goddess on mechanical principles well known to the ancient Egyptians and subsequently the Greeks, who called them *Neuros pasta*.

She was clothed in white, with a blue scarf about her shoulders, and a *necklace and cross of blue stones* were upon her neck and bosom. But the most notable thing was that she was weighted with jewels of all kinds. Rings were upon her fingers, bracelets were upon her arms, chains of gold and strings of pearls and rubies hung about her shoulders to her waist, and above all a crown of great and priceless diamonds and sapphires was upon her head, while at her feet was a tumbled heap of jewels and gold and silver ornaments.

“When the noonday sun looks directly down upon her,” murmured the Lalla, while they looked and said no word, “the ancient word of our people is that she wakes and desires to speak in the Roumin tongue of the land from

which she came; and the word is, moreover, that when the expected Roumin arrive, and kneel and embrace her feet—then she will live, indeed; she will surrender herself to them, and will take flight with them through the air to the land of the Roumin, whence she was brought to be a curse to this land. For the Lalla, Sidis, has of a truth cursed this land; and the promise is that when she shall depart, the waste places shall flourish again, and the White City will once again be the abode of living folk!”

“If we remove her, then,” said Sandy, “we remove a curse? Is that so?”

“That is so, indeed and in truth, Sidi,” answered the Lalla.

“But how can we remove her?” said Jim, in English.

“Hush!” murmured the doctor.

He was watching the shaft of bright sunlight. In another second the sun shone straight down—it was high noon—and his perpendicular beam lighted upon the head of the pagan idol.

“Ah!” cried the Lalla Samana, who was watching from the entrance. “Allah have mercy! She lives!”

Certainly the eyes of the image seemed to live; the lids fell and rose and fell again with mechanical regularity.

“Go forward and kneel, Sidi Tabeeb!” urged the Lalla.

The doctor stepped forward and knelt; and then a strange, soft humming sound came from the image. That lasted a second or two; and then there was a brazen clangor; at the same instant the floor ran, as if shuddering, away from beneath the doctor, and the image, as if thus loosened from its base, rocked, tottered, and toppled over.

The doctor should have fallen into the hole that opened beneath him, but Sandy caught him by the arm and then he himself clung to the side of the hole. But the precious and over-weighted image of the ancient idol, having tottered and toppled, fell sheer through the hole—carrying all her treasure with her, save her crown, which fell upon the doctor,

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and was grabbed by Sandy. As the image fell, a louder clangour than before broke out, as of the violent opening and clashing of brazen gates. Then there came up through the hole a sound as of the letting out and the rushing of waters.

And a second later, human cries of anguish and terror rose from beneath.

CHAPTER XXV

WHO WERE THE VEILED MEN

"HEAVENS!" cried Sandy. "If water should have got into the tunnel at the bottom of the shaft! The girls and Kadoor!"

All apprehended the danger, and all turned and ran toward the door into the shaft, the Lalla first. Arrived there, they called down, and were answered by Kadoor.

"The water! Yes, the water! Allah be praised I was here, or the maidens would be gone! We climb up to you."

The three figures of Kadoor and the two girls could be seen clinging to the regular projections in the shaft and climbing upward, while the light fell upon swirling waters below them.

"I can only think," said the doctor, "that by some machinery, when that piece of floor rolled from under me, it opened a sluice and

let the water of the horrible Pool run out. I suppose I must have trodden or knelt upon a spring."

"A very pretty trick, 'pon my word, whoever arranged it!" quoth Sandy, looking at the Lalla.

"Ah! Sidi," said she, "I am amazed and afflicted."

"You can't suspect her," said the doctor in English, "of knowing what was going to happen. Do you think she'd have risked drowning her daughter—if nothing else? No! of course not."

"No, no!" said Sandy. "Of course I don't suspect her. She's been had, as we have been."

"We have at least secured the crown," said the doctor. "Will you keep charge of that, or shall I?"

"You had better," said Sandy, but as if reluctantly. "And for any sake hide it about you. Put it in your turban. Heaven knows how a precious thing like that might tempt even honest people who want to be rid of

a curse, although I don't suppose the natives about here know the value of diamonds and sapphires."

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When Kadoor and the girls reached the open door in which the others waited, they were drawn in. But when, after careful examination, there was discovered no other way out of the chamber of the lost virgin and the lost treasure but that by which they had entered, they determined to climb again to the top of the tower and see if there was no descent from there.

Arrived again upon the lofty platform they glanced around, and their gaze was instantly arrested by the change beneath them. The ruined White City, when last they looked on it, had been as dry and bare as the desert; now a stream, issuing from somewhere below them, wandered in and out among the ruins, on toward the valley of the Ait Yalla—a stream of very considerable volume.

"Wallahy!" cried the Lalla. "What if it should pour into the valley of my people,

swell the stream already there, wash away the houses, and drown the people?"

They looked around. No creatures were to be seen close at hand—save the miserable dead lying in the sun—but some miles off the pursuit of the Moors by the Dadsmen and the Ait Yalla was still maintained. If the stream, then, entered the valley, there might be none to take remedies against its encroachments save women and children and very old men.

"We must get out of this at once! Hang it all!" cried Sandy. "These folk have been awfully friendly, and we must cut in and help them now if we can!"

After a little exploration and discussion it was concluded that the only way of leaving what was virtually their prison, was to tear their cloaks in strips and descend some fifty feet over the battlements on to a ruined ledge of masonry, whence (so far as the eye could tell from above) by leaps, more or less perilous, they might descend toward the middle of the great building, and find the way by

which Sandy and the doctor were led in the night before by the Veiled Men.

They cut their goat's-hair cloaks in strips with their daggers, and thus made a stout rope. The Lalla and the girls were first lowered, one by one, a loop being made in the end; then, the top end being tied to a slab in the parapet, the men went down sailor-wise. After that they continued their exit, with danger, indeed, but without mishap, and at last issued by a huge flat-topped gateway from the great Temple, and thankfully sped down the wide, deserted street toward the market-place.

They shuddered and averted their heads as they passed the dead, who were already becoming offensive in the great heat of the sun. At the entrance to the market-place they came upon some of the dead of the Veiled Men. They remained veiled, nothing being seen of them but their staring eyes. The doctor paused.

"I *should* like to know," he said, half to himself, "if my suspicion is right. I must look."

He went up to one, the whole company following him, and with his dagger cut away the lower veil. A cry of horror escaped from all, and they fell back. The face was—yes, it was too terrible to be described.

“I thought so,” said the doctor, with disgust and sadness. “*Lepers!*”

He himself went forward and raised (but did not cut)—raised the veil of another and another. He returned to his companions, but said nothing as they went on their way.

“Are they all alike?” asked his brother.

“More or less,” he answered. “I guess,” he continued after a little while, “they are rather the descendants of lepers than original lepers, if I may say so. I should think the leprosy is dying out in them. I wonder what their history is. Strange! Strange!” he murmured. And at last: “Poor beggars! I’m sorry I thought so ill of them, and hated them so abominably! Well, they’ve gone to their account with a poor opinion of us!”

They toiled on through the heat toward the green and pleasant valley. They were faint-

ing with hunger and thirst, but the thirst was most urgent in its demands.

They came upon the new stream, but they remembered where it came from (in all probability), and they refrained from drinking its water, though it looked clear as crystal. And still they hastened on; for the stream, with all its small meanderings, was making for the head of the valley. They followed it with anxiety to within less than half-a-mile of the head—the northern end of the valley.

There suddenly it turned abruptly from a westerly direction to a southerly. And what was the cause, think you? A dead donkey!

Let me explain. There was, in truth, a kind of embankment, behind which lay a donkey, shot dead, and Isaac Goldstein with a broken leg, while in patient attendance was White—Black having been borne off by the Moors, he said.

“O my blessed dear life!” cried Isaac, as soon as he had recognised Sandy and the doctor. “I suppose you thought I’d run off.

Not me. Copped! 'Pon my honour! And—oh, dear! oh, dear!—my poor leg!”

“But how did you get here?” asked Sandy.

“I'm just a-goin' to tell you,” began Isaac; but they stopped him, saying his story could be told any time. They wished to know how the embankment had been made against the stream.

“I made it,” said White. “I was afraid my donkey would be washed away.”

Not a word about seeking to save Isaac. But from his story it appeared that the donkey being shot, and Isaac having his leg broken, whilst the stream followed as if expressly to drown them, since he could not move either the donkey or Isaac, and wished neither to be overwhelmed nor swept away by the water, he moved the stream out of the way by building stones against its approach and filling the spaces in between with earth as hard and as tight as possible. It may be also that the stream was in a mood to be turned at that point—at any rate, turned it was.

And so the valley and the village of the Ait

Yalla were spared from a flood, and perhaps from destruction. For, as they followed the stream, they discovered that it had turned into the valley just at its lower end, and there was in the act of joining the valley stream, which flowed away to the south-west, toward the waters of the Draa.

“Well, Henry, my boy,” said the doctor to White—White walked by his side, while Sandy and Kadoor carried Isaac—“in turning that stream you have done better and more useful work to-day than anybody else I’ve seen.”

White did not know a bit what the doctor meant, but he was very proud all the same. Then, as they descended into the valley, welcomed by the loud halloos of the men and the trilling of the women (those from Dads had proclaimed who they were), they discovered that the stream, having spared the valley and the village, was taking vengeance on their enemies.

“Behold!” said the old Shereef of Dads, leaning to rest on his long firelock. “It is the will of Allah!”

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It was a strange sight to which he pointed, and which all the village had come out to view with extraordinary interest. Let it first be understood that all the solid-seeming and imposing walls, dwellings, towers, and castles of these deep valleys of the desert are made of *tabia*, which may be described as concrete without lime. In the desert, where rain never falls, that material continues from year to year, apparently as hard and as durable as stone. But let water play upon it, and it is like blotting-paper, and the most imposing erections will melt away like castles of sand on the sea-shore when the tide comes in.

So well is that known, that one of the great tricks of war between one tribe and one village and another is to turn a water-course (instead of cannon) against the strongest-seeming fortification. To defeat that trick the water-courses are defended by what are called water-towers, strong erections on high, artificial mounds, watched and garrisoned by picked men, whose duty it is to prevent any inter-

ference with the water-channels. It was, then, to such a tower that the Shereef pointed at the end of the valley.

He explained that the Basha and his escaping Moors, having found that tower empty because its defenders were away fighting with the rest of the village, had entered and taken possession with intent to maintain themselves there against the men of the village.

But, behold what was happening! The new stream, which the Shereef called "The Water of Vengeance," had so swelled the volume of the village stream that the water had risen and was steadily undermining and crumbling away the great tower which was usually well above all touch of water.

And still, as they looked, the watching crowd from the village sent up a great shout, for the tower bodily toppled over and plunged into the stream, carrying with it the people who had taken refuge therein! Not a foot was stirred nor a hand raised to rescue the poor wretches whose cries of despair went up to Heaven.

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“It is the will of Allah!” said the old Sher-eef. “It is the will of Allah!” was passed round in a murmur of resignation.

“I can’t stand this, at any price!” cried Sandy Peebles.

And in a second or two he and Jim and the doctor (who handed over his precious turban to the Lalla Samana to hold) had plunged into the swollen stream, and were swimming to the help of those who were vainly seeking safety on the ruins of the tower, which were rapidly dissolving under them. Spite of all their efforts, Sandy and his comrades only brought to land an old white-bearded man and a negro boy.

The black boy was their friend Black, and the old man was their enemy the Basha, and they were both nearly drowned and unconscious. The doctor speedily brought them round, in the approved way of restoring the drowned, and then a joyful procession was formed, and they were conducted through wonderful and delightful gardens of flowers and vegetables and orchards—one might say

woods—of date-palms to the village of the Lalla Samana's people of Ait Yalla.

Then they rested, and were entertained most hospitably by the simple Berber tribesmen for a good many days. Toward the end of their stay there was a marriage-feast. Kador, having been made rich by Sandy Peebles (on behalf of the whole party), had asked the Lalla Samana for her daughter to be his bride; and the Lalla had consented. By that time it had become well known that the Treasure and the Image—the Lady—of the Roumin, which had so long been hidden in the Djin-haunted temple and cursed the land, had all been lost in the outbreaking river, except the crown which the doctor held, and which the simple tribesmen regarded as nothing more than a pretty ornament. So little did they think of it, that they petitioned that the bride of Kador should wear it at the marriage ceremony and feast—"to turn the luck." The doctor and his companions had no fear of theft, and they willingly acquiesced in the general desire. But the Lalla Samana demurred.

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“Nay, Sidi Tabeeb,” said she; “but anything of the treasure should be touched by none but a Roumi.”

She was, however, persuaded; and the bride wore the crown. It was when the revelry was at its height, and the bride was resting apart, talking in confidence with her friend Susannah, that a cry of alarm and distress suddenly arose. On the revelry being hushed and the guests turning about to see what was the matter, it was discovered that a crazy old man, who had entered freely, as all did, had made a snatch at the bride's crown; and there he stood wringing his hands and shedding tears, and whining and whimpering, because he had been deprived of it.

The poor crazy old man was he who had been the Basha Mohammed Misfiwa.

He was led away to his favourite occupation, which was shaving—especially shaving the head of Black, from whom he refused to be parted, and whom (as Jim put it) he was always trying to “translate without a crib.”

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Black, having conceived a preference for the Basha and for the free, simple life of the valley, was going to remain there; and enough money to make wealth for him in his simple condition was left in the hands of Kadoor.

At last the day came for the pilgrims to attempt the return to Europe—though all were regularly besieged with invitations to stay for ever, and marry and prosper in the Happy Valley.

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Their journey to the coast was long, but uneventful, for they did not dare to return by way of Marakesh or Morocco, and their Berber friends could give them something like a free pass through the Berber tribes of the upper valley of the Draa and the mountains of the Lower Atlas. And thus, within their three months, they were at Mogador, waiting for their skipper. By the end of October they were once more in London, and Isaac Goldstein was free to revel in the delights of Houndsditch and Whitechapel High-street.

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At once the doctor (accompanied by his ward, Susannah, for Susannah had not gone to seek out her people in Tetuan. Jim and Susannah, and the doctor also, understood why)—the doctor went to an eminent expert in jewels to have the crown valued.

“But,” cried the expert, “this is absolutely unique and priceless. No single person could hope to buy it, not even Queen Victoria nor the Czar of Russia. It is Ancient Roman. And as to the stones, there are few like them.”

He finally suggested that the only way to dispose of the crown (concerning which he was clearly very suspicious, in spite of the respectable references of the doctor)—the only way was to take the stones from their setting.

“And how, doctor,” asked Susannah, when they left the expert, “do you think that that and the other precious things got into that ruined Temple in the Jebel Saghru?”

“I can only think,” answered the doctor, “that in the African wars of Ancient Rome

the idol was carried off from some city in one of the many Italian colonies on the northern coasts. Remember when we read history we find the Roman always conquering the African, but no doubt in their wars with Numidia and other African States the legions sometimes got cut up and the towns they guarded sacked, and that was probably the origin of this treasure being carried off and set up in the White City as a trophy of African triumph. How it got right away down into the desert I cannot guess, though that may have been only lately, for I have a notion that the ruined White City was inhabited a hundred years ago. But it's very wonderful how the people round about have kept alive the tradition of the Treasure, and yet have never touched it!"

Well, when finally the crown was sold piecemeal, I would not like to say how much money—how many tens of thousands—fell to the share of all concerned—little White, the doctor and Sandy, and Jim and Susannah (whose shares were "pooled" in a little while in the

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natural way of marriage), while even Isaac Goldstein, who doubted if he would get anything, smiled cheerfully at the check which he received signed by the doctor.

